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MODERNIST TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH THEOLOGY

1902 - 1939

by

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PREFACE

I have allowed the Introduction to stand as it is. It expresses the original intention of the writer. Time has not permitted the writing of the third chapter, however. I trust that what is presented is capable of standing in its present form.

In the second chapter I have made a number of references to Broad Churchmen and Lux Mundi. I have elsewhere discussed both these positions at some length and will be glad to furnish my findings if they are desired.

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## Modernist Tendencies in English Theology

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### INTRODUCTION

In a theological context the term "Modernism," in its variant forms, has been used to describe a variety of religious philosophies and tendencies.<sup>1</sup> In this thesis the term is employed in the narrower sense in which it was first used at the beginning of the twentieth century: Hastings' Dictionary of Religion and Ethics is the first English work to define the term and it is there used to describe that movement within the Roman Catholic Church whose prime figures were Loisy and Tyrrell. I shall use the terms "Catholic Modernism" and "Modernism" throughout invariably to describe this Roman Catholic movement which flourished 1902-1908,<sup>2</sup> and which was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church; and to describe those like von Hugel, who though Modernists, were able to remain within the Roman Church. The inception of Modernism, which was by no means an organized and unified movement, may be said to date from Loisy's reply to Harnack in 1902 (L'Evangile et l'Eglise), in much the same way that the Oxford Movement dates from Keble's Assize Sermon in 1833.

Modernism is at least partially a revolt against the dominant school of Protestant theology, generally termed "Liberal Protestantism," and of which Harnack's Wesen des Christentums (1900) is the best statement and final synthesis and expression of the

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1. cf. especially H.D.A. Major, English Modernism; Its Origin, Methods, Aims (Cambridge, Mass. 1927), chapter 2.

2. Loisy's views after 1908, when he ceased to be a member of the Church, developed beyond what is here described (classical Modernism), and thus his later views will hardly be considered.

nineteenth century theologies of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. The first chapter of my thesis is a systematic study of the theologies of three principal and representative Roman Catholic Modernists: Loisy, Tyrrell, and von Hugel.

The second chapter will deal with the influence of Modernist ideas on that group of theologians in England who were affiliated with the Churchmen's Union (founded 1898, later known as the Modern Churchmen's Union, 1928). This group, the descendents of the liberal Broad Churchmen of the nineteenth century, was strongly influenced by continental Liberal Protestant theology: as late as 1921 over two-thirds of the speakers at the Modern Churchmen's Girton Conference followed the Liberal Protestant practice of trying to separate the kernel of Jesus from the husk of ecclesiastical dogma, and found in the originality of Jesus' teaching of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man the main evidence of an exceptional relationship with God. H.D.A. Major, the patriarch of the Modern Churchmen's Union, termed this movement "English Modernism." As he has not been widely followed in this, and because the term is easily confusing, I have not used it, and will invariably refer to the Modern Churchmen as Modern Churchmen, the term, by the way, which Major preferred. Modernist ideas had, I believe, a steadily increasing influence on certain members of this party.

The third chapter will deal with the influence of Modernist ideas on a segment of the Anglo-Catholic party, especially Spens, Selwyn, and Wilfred Knox, who perhaps brought Modernist tendencies to their fullest development in Essays Catholic and Critical (1926).



My purpose is to show that by the late twenties and early thirties, there was a real and rapidly-growing Modernist tendency among the more able and aware members of both the major influential parties of the Church: the Anglo-Catholics and the Modern Churchmen. This growing synthesis, particularly at Cambridge, was only beginning to bear fruit, I believe, when it was interrupted in 1928 by the Prayer Book Controversy (which brought out the differences between these two parties), by Hoskyns' discovery of Karl Barth in the thirties (with consequent disastrous results), and by the general morass of the late thirties and the Second World War's upheaval and loss of confidence.

The reader should never lose sight, as I often have been tempted to, of the fact that not only were the mass of Christians largely unaware of what was going on in theological circles of the period (they were preoccupied with Prayer Book and ritual controversies if they were interested at all), but the majority of clergy were middle of the road parish priests, members of neither the Anglo-Catholic party nor Modern Churchmen's Union, and were not even Broad Churchmen in the nineteenth century (party) sense of Stanley. Also the reader is reminded that both the leader of the Modern Churchmen's Union (Dean Inge) and the leader of the Anglo-Catholic party (Bishop Gore) rejected Catholic Modernism out of hand. Throughout the period there were as well strong conservative parties: an Evangelical party which was nearly fundamentalist and which emphasised, in Protestant fashion, the Atonement; and an Anglo-Catholic segment whose outlook on the Bible and liturgy, like that of Rome, may only be described as medieval.

## Chapter One

### Roman Catholic Modernism

#### INTRODUCTION

The important question for the scholar of Roman Catholic Modernism is whether there is a system of theology which can be called Modernism.

The decree Lamentabili (1907) and the encyclical Pascendi condemned a movement called Modernism, described as "the synthesis of all the heresies" and as highly organized and unified. The theology of this movement, as described in the two papal pronouncements, has little relation to the actual theologies of the Modernist theologians. This fact is accepted by all reputable scholars of the subject, even the most conservative Roman Catholics.

Almost all scholars have approached this subject with the attitude Alec Vidler has recently expressed: "It was a highly complicated movement and those who were described as 'Modernists' differed widely from one another."<sup>1</sup> The best recent studies of the subject have concurred in this attitude.

It is therefore with some trepidation that I attempt to describe Modernism as a systematic theology, by bringing out the similarity in the viewpoints of those who were labelled Modernists. Such an approach to the problem I believe to be both necessary and desirable. Most writers on the subject in detail to date have taken a chronological and biographical approach which has tended to

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1. A.R.Vidler, Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xiv, p<sup>t</sup>2, Oct. 1963, p. 251, reviewing Poulat's Le Modernisme



accentuate differences.<sup>2</sup> The main figures of the movement could hardly have had more different personalities, and they certainly moved in different circles. To my knowledge no scholar has undertaken a detailed systematization of the essential points they held in common. Between the detailed chronological accounts and the wild generalizations of the textbooks there has been no adequate brief statement of the common position of these Roman Catholic theologians.<sup>3</sup>

I may perhaps be permitted briefly to indicate the motivation behind the writing of this chapter. Of all the modern movements in theology, I think Roman Catholic Modernism has been the most maligned and misrepresented, both within the Roman Church (universally) and outside it (by such men as Inge). A member of the Episcopal Theological School remarked recently, after singing a hymn in Chapel which he considered theologically unsound, that he sang it as a Catholic Modernist. A similar view of Modernism is taken in a fictitious conversation between von Hugel and a friend:

The Baron. There can be no doubt that Our Lady failed to occupy her proper place at the Crucifixion; the evidence of the Synoptic Gospels makes this clear.

The Friend. Yes. But it is a long way from this to the Salve Regina.

The Baron. There can be no doubt that Our Lord's faith broke down on Calvary.

The Friend. Yes. But it is a long way from this to the Nicene Creed.

The Baron. There can be no doubt that St. Paul's teaching on the Eucharist is based upon certain forms of Syrian nature-worship.

The Friend. Yes. But it is a long way from this

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2. e.g. A.R.Vidler, The Modernism Movement in the Roman Church (Cambridge 1934); and J. Riviere, Le Modernisme dans l'Eglise (Paris 1929); and most recently E. Poulat, Histoire, dogme, et critique dans La Crise Moderniste (Paris 1962).

3. J.F.Bethune-Baker, The Way of Modernism (Cambridge 1927) is a notable exception.

to the Tantum Ergo.

The Baron. I hear the Angelus; I must go and make my evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>4</sup>

Ronald Knox's view is similar, in what he calls "The Modernist Prayer:"

O God, forasmuch as without Thee,  
We are not able to doubt Thee,  
Help us all by Thy grace,  
To teach the whole race,  
We know nothing whatever about Thee.<sup>5</sup>

The object of this chapter is to show that these comments on Modernism -- both malicious and amusing -- are completely unjustified, being based on a perverse and shallow study of the subject.

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4. M. de la Bedoyere, Life of Baron von Hugel (London 1951), pp. 214-15

5. Major, English Modernism, p. 39

# 1. THE COURSE OF THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The antecedents of the Modernist crisis of 1907 have been ably described by a host of scholars, as indicated above. It is therefore only necessary briefly to summarize the events to refresh the reader's mind, before proceeding to a discussion of Modernist theology.

Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), a Catholic by birth, upbringing, and education, became a priest at twenty-three, after what he described as a "singular experience."<sup>6</sup> Early in life, however, he was aware of abuses in the theology and organization of the Church and counted himself a liberal. At the Institut Catholique he was close to Duchesne who tutored him in the latest Biblical and historical criticism. He attended Renan's lectures in December 1882, but never spoke to him. Agreeing only with Renan's methods and not his conclusions, Loisy maintained that his own study had led him independently to Renan's methods. The same year the brilliant young scholar became lecturer in Hebrew at the Institut Catholique and by 1890 was a professor. In 1889 Duchesne saw where critical and historical methods would lead and warned Loisy that his conclusions would never be accepted by the Church, and urged him to confine his work to philology. But Loisy was encouraged by d'Hulst, the Rector of the Institut Catholique, when, in his obituary of Renan (1892), d'Hulst showed himself friendly to Loisy's methods and announced his intention of making the Institut Catholique a center for critical studies. Two great blows the following year bore out Duchesne's warning, however:

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6. Loisy, My Duel with the Vatican (translated by R.W. Boynton) (New York 1924), p. 53. It occurred at mass at Ambieres in 1871.

in an article entitled 'La Question Biblique' in 1893, in an effort to encourage the critical studies he little understood, d'Hulst spoke approvingly of a "left wing" of theologians who held that the dogma of infallibility covered only statements which involved "faith and morals." Loisy, though he strongly repudiated this ridiculous mosaic view, was immediately identified with it. Loisy, of course, started not from any form of infallibility, but with a critical study of the human documents, then related them to dogma. In November, the encyclical Providentissimus Deus of Leo XIII clearly condemned these actual views of Loisy (though not by name), maintaining that "the divine inspiration far from admitting the co-existence of error, by itself excludes all error," and that "all the books in all their parts have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," being "dictated by the Holy Spirit." Loisy, easily finding loop holes, was able to submit in the spirit of Dupanloup. But at the Institut he was relegated to oriental languages. In 1894 he resigned to become chaplain of a girls' school (1894-99), after which he held a number of positions and maintained himself privately. At this time he read Newman On Development, Sabatier, and Harnack's History of Dogma.

In 1902, his hope aroused by Leo XIII's newly appointed Biblical commission (which he hoped would liberalize the official position), and encouraged by Mignot and von Hugel, Loisy published L'Evangile et L'Eglise (translated The Gospel and the Church 1903) which was a reply to Harnack's Das Wesen des Christenthums (translated from the German edition of 1900 as What is Christianity 1901). Although his primary motivation was to attack Harnack's Liberal Protestantism,

the book had the secondary effect of advancing a fresh apologetic for Catholicism which abandoned Biblical inerrancy and scholastic philosophy. He was condemned by Cardinal Richard (who was followed by only seven bishops) and he submitted. Von Hugel, Mignot, and W. G. Ward urged him to clarify his position, which was not yet condemned by Rome, and after seeing hopes for a liberal Biblical Commission come to nought, he published the rejoinder Autour d'un Petit Livre in October 1903, together with his second edition of The Gospel and the Church and a massive tome on the Fourth Gospel. In Autour the attack on Harnack is scarcely noticeable, and he rather tactlessly advances his claims that the conclusions cannot be determined by dogmatic presuppositions, that dogma is modified in the light of investigation of the facts, and that the Christological dogma has not reached its final development (though he believes history is enough to justify Catholic dogma, which is a judgment of faith and not an act of history). The denouement came speedily.

In 1903 Pius X ascended the papal throne and Loisy's books were placed on the Index. In February 1904, to his lasting regret, Loisy submitted, though he hoped to remain within the Church without giving up his views.<sup>7</sup> For a while he continued to say Mass in private. He soon realized, however, that it was not possible long to continue both critical and Catholic, and refusing to submit in 1907 to Lamentabili and Pascendi, he published in 1908 his Simplex Reflexions and his work on the Synoptics, shortly after which he was excommunicated (March 1908). His later writings as professor (1909-1930) at the College de France do not concern us here, as I have said in the

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7. He was maligned by the Pope who said, "I have a letter from Abbe Loisy....He appeals to my heart, but the letter was not written from his heart." (M.D.Petre, Loisy (Cambridge 1944), p. 50)



Introduction, and though he never lost his Catholic Christian faith,<sup>8</sup> these later works show a more radical development of his early views. His Memoires of 1930-31 are, however, of interest to the scholar of classical Roman Catholic Modernism.

The other great theological Modernist upon whom the papal axe fell was George Tyrrell (1861-1909), Irish by birth, who became a Jesuit after a journey upwards through Anglicanism. Teaching at St. Mary's, Stonyhurst, the brilliant young priest soon became disillusioned with the Jesuit mystique and with the predominant Suarezian interpretation of Thomas Aquinas and sought more freedom of study. Between 1897 and 1900 he was a liberal of the W. G. Ward variety and in 1897 attracted the attention of Baron von Hugel who considerably broadened his mind by introducing him to the non-scholastic thought of Blondel, Laberthonniere, Loisy, etc. Von Hugel's influence on Tyrrell can hardly be exaggerated, and Miss Petre has documented their friendship.<sup>9</sup> Tyrrell wrote von Hugel in 1901: "everytime I meet you or hear from you, I am poked a little further."<sup>10</sup> He was a prolific writer of articles, the most significant of which was "The Relation of Theology to Devotion," written in November 1899, of which he later remarked: "I am amazed to see how little I have simply eddied round and round the same point. It is all here -- all that follows -- not

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8. cf. Petre, Loisy, p. 4: "But through all his life ran an unbroken thread of religious faith and belief, and the Loisy who died in 1940 was nearer to the Loisy of the early priesthood than to the storm-tossed Loisy of the modernist period." A.R.Vidler has remarked that Miss Petre told him that she once left Loisy (who was excommunicate) at the gate of a Church and went herself to mass, to return to find Loisy in tears of grief.

9. M.D.Petre, Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell (New York 1912) vol. 2, p. 87ff. cf. also M.D.Petre, von Hugel and Tyrrell, The Story of a Friendship (London 1937). Von Hugel's interest was aroused after he read Tyrrell's Nova et Vetera 1897.

10. Petre, Autobiography and Life of Tyrrell, vol. 2, p. 94



in germ but in explicit statement -- as it were a brief compendium or analytical index."<sup>11</sup> The best known of his articles was 1899's "A Perverted Devotion"<sup>12</sup> which pled for agnosticism as regards everlasting punishment. The article brought about his condemnation and rustication by the head of the Jesuit order.

Though he rapidly came to accept the critical views of Loisy, Tyrrell's great concern remained with living the Christian life as the test of orthodoxy -- the truth of the creed must meet the test of experience, the *lex credendi* is tried by the *lex orandi*. He advanced this view in Lex Orandi (1903), his last book to receive the imprimatur,<sup>1</sup> which concluded conservatively that concrete living experience could justify a full Catholic dogma and ecclesiastical institution better than the vague Liberal Protestantism. Catholic dogma could be justified by its prayer value. The same year he published pseudonymously The Church and the Future which explicitly repudiated the traditional idea of a depositum fidei, which Loisy had discreetly ignored. He advanced beyond Loisy also in that he did not attempt always to reinterpret traditional orthodoxy to make it compatible with modern criticism, but boldly stated that Biblical and ecclesiastical inerrancy must be abandoned just as a *dynamic* view of revelation must be adopted.

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11. The article is found in The Faith of the Millions, First Series, chapter 10 (pp. 228-252). The quote comes from Tyrrell, Through Scylla and Charybdis (London 1907), p. 85

12. Reprinted in Essays on Faith and Immortality (London 1914), pp. 158-71: the Church's teaching "seems and is intended to seem, absurd and impossible, for it causes man to appear more just, more kind than his Maker."

1. Petre, Autobiography and Life of Tyrrell, vol. 2, p. 182: "There was further trouble in regard to the second edition, and Dr. Bourne, by then Archbishop of Westminster, sent word to the Provincial that 'had he read chapter xxiii of Lex Orandi he should have hesitated about the imprimatur....'"

In February 1906 he was expelled from the Jesuits after his "Letter to a Professor" (published as A Much Abused Letter), though he was not yet secularized. He tried to correct the pragmatic tendencies of Lex Orandi the same year by means of Lex Credendi: truth was knowable in prayer (as versus pragmatism), but was inexpressible completely in dogma.

In 1907 he attacked Pascendi in The Times, for which he was deprived of the sacraments (minor excommunication). In 1908 he published Medievalism, a work of great haste lacking profundity, in which he replied to Cardinal Mercier's denunciation of him. At this point he was tempted to return to the Church of England<sup>2</sup> but he never did. On the verge of death in July 1909 he received the Blessed Sacrament, but Miss Petre's announcement in The Times that he had not retracted his views led the Catholic hierarchy to deny him Roman Catholic burial, and his body rests in the Anglican churchyard at Storrington. His last, posthumous, work (Christianity at the Cross Roads, 1909) was a declaration of faith both Christian and Catholic (pace Houtin and Rashdall<sup>3</sup>), and though he attacked Roman corruptions he felt that Rome had preserved Jesus in his integrity (e.g. that the new eschatological view of Jesus was much more compatible with Roman Catholic dogma than with the views of Liberal Protestantism.)

The man described as the archleader<sup>4</sup> of the Modernist Movement, however, met with no fate similar to that of Loisy and Tyrrell.

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2. Petre, Life and Autobiography of Tyrrell, vol. 2, p. 373

3. cf. Rashdall, Ideas and Ideals (Oxford 1928), pp. 103-4, where he maintains that Tyrrell remained loyal to the Roman Church only because he fancied her practices, and had "altar-hunger," though he believed none of her teachings

4. Petre, "Friedrich von Hugel; Thoughts and Reminiscences," in The Hibbert Journal, vol. xxiv, number 1, October 1925, pp. 77-87

Friedrich von Hugel (1852-1925), Baron of the Holy Roman Empire, was born of Roman Catholic parents at Rome, was left physically weakened by typhus, passed through a religious crisis and devoted his whole life to the study of religion. He early found himself in the liberal party, and at Fribourg, for example, in 1897, he defended the new critical views of the Old Testament. He was in complete sympathy with Modernist aims, and though his own principal writings did not bear directly on subjects of particularly Modernist interest or controversy, he is aptly described as the leader and chief liaison officer of the Modernist movement. His capacity for friendship, voluminous correspondence, and frequent trips abroad from his English residence, kept Modernists in England and on the continent in communication, allowing them to benefit from one another's research.

As far as Modernism is concerned he is more notable as a personality than an original scholar. His great creative works (The Mystical Element in Religion, Eternal Life, The Reality of God, Essays and Addresses) concern issues largely outside the Modernist controversy. As a Modernist, his intellectual contribution was to state with balance and restraint the views of Loisy and Tyrrell, with whom he was in almost entire agreement. As his life progressed, it is true, he became somewhat obsessed with transcendence<sup>5</sup>, and came to fear what he regarded as immanent tendencies in the "philosophy of action" of Blondel, and in the writings of Loisy and Tyrrell. In so far as Loisy and Tyrrell slighted metaphysics and stressed subjective religious experience, he was ill at ease. He kept the fact

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5. Idem.

ever in view that it was in the Church, despite her faults, that the experience of the objective transcendent God was mediated to man.

Von Hugel's influence on Christianity outside the Roman Church was always far greater than within the Church, and it is no exaggeration to say that, though von Hugel and Miss Petre (the friend of all three Modernists and herself one) were not excommunicated, they were virtually alone in their views within the Roman Church after 1908. Lamentabili and Pascendi effectively killed theological Modernism within the Roman Church, and Sacrorum Antistitum (1910) laid out practical measures for its complete eradication.

## 2. LOISY'S THEOLOGY

### a. The Apprehension of God

To understand Loisy's position it is essential to keep always in mind the fact that he was by birth, upbringing, conviction, and practice a Roman Catholic. He himself has paid moving tribute to his Catholic background (even though he attacks certain abuses) and to the devotional and theological education which he received within the Church. Miss Petre has described his devotion to the liturgy<sup>6</sup> and to the Blessed Sacrament. He himself tells of the religious experience he had while hearing mass in 1871: "It was a sort of illumination.... It was from that very day that I was marked for the sacrifice, and guided almost without realizing it toward the priestly office."<sup>7</sup>

Loisy has wrongly often been called an immanentist.<sup>8</sup> This is to overlook the basis of Loisy's whole attitude, however. Loisy had a keen, almost over-powering personal experience, in the Church, of the transcendent God. "Certainly," he wrote Miss Petre, "I believe in the transcendent, in the ideal, and its reality, as something other in itself than humanity. But I abstain from defining this otherness...."<sup>9</sup> Here is the crux of Loisy's position: the intuition of, faith in, and

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6. Petre, Loisy, p. 56f.

7. Loisy, My Duel, p. 54. The actual formal decision came in October 1873 in a retreat

8. e.g. Vidler, Modernism, p. 125: "It must be admitted that Loisy's writings, as indeed much other modernist work, were in harmony with the prevailing tendency towards immanentism in philosophy....In this respect the Modernists were creatures of their own time."

9. Petre, Loisy, p. 83



absolute certainty of the divine transcendent God is felt by the Christian, but it is impossible for him accurately to define in dogmas this experience. Loisy maintains not that God is unknowable, but that it is impossible ever to comprehend him once for all certainly and accurately in dogma. Loisy felt that since man is man and can be nothing more, he could never rationally define, in human terms, the transcendent God whom he spiritually apprehends and mystically perceives. That would be for reason to intrude the domain of faith.<sup>10</sup>

Knowledge of God is found in one place: in man. Religion is thus a human fact, in that revelation is made to man's experience. Religion's "origins are to be sought within man's experience (dans l'ame humaine).... There may be exterior proofs for revelation, as Trent declared, but revelation itself is never exterior."<sup>11</sup> "Knowledge of God, such as we have, is always mediated through human apprehension in experience. 'Intuition' characterizes perception."<sup>1</sup> But just as for Teilhard de Chardin God is not nature itself but is found in nature, so for Loisy God utterly transcends the humanity in which he is found.

Never does Loisy place faith in humanity, collectively or individually: "Our faith is not in the human race as such, nor in our frail individualities, it is in the Spirit which leads and the

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10. Tyrrell, Through Scylla and Charybdis, p. 100 expressed this well: "I have more than once known all the joy and reality taken out of a life that fed on devotion to the Sacramental Presence by...a flash of theological illumination."

11. G.S.Simpson, Alfred Loisy and the Christological Problem (unpublished MS in the St. Mark's Library of the General Theological Seminary, New York, 1957, p. 28 discussing Simple Reflexions

1. Ibid., p. 3



ideal which raises humanity...",<sup>2</sup> i.e. in the transcendent God who reveals his Spirit to human experience. The role of reasoned dogma is to explain, categorize, describe, and order the living intuition of our experience. As such, dogma and reason are indispensable: "We cannot do without reason, for its function is to regulate...the current of our experience. Humanity is not so fashioned as to plunge into the ideal and live wholly in the spirit; it is reason that gives them practical usage....But it is not reason that sustains and animates all these things. The profoundly mystical, living, spiritual sense which carries men forward, as it were against themselves, that sense so often failing but never conquered, is the eternal faith, the intuition of the infinite life which we behold as it were in a vision and seek to realize."<sup>3</sup>

Faith was thus the spiritual or mystical apprehension of God; dogma, the attempt to describe in word and thought this apprehension, must spring from that experience, must be regarded as inadequate, human, changeable. So man's collective reason, operating after the spiritual apprehension of God, must be absolutely free ever to strive more accurately to describe in human terms the transcendent object of its intuitive perception. "What we have to do is to renew theology from top to bottom; to substitute the religious for the dogmatic spirit, to seek the soul of theological truth, and leave reason free under the control of conscience."<sup>4</sup> Such a view

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2. Loisy, Religion et Humanite, pp. 111-114, quoted in Petre, Loisy, pp. 98-99.

3. Idem.

4. Alfred Loisy, Memoires (Paris 1930-33), vol. 1, p. 210

went against current Roman theology: first, in stating the changeableness and inadequacy of dogma, and secondly, in insisting that the critical and rational faculties of man must not be hampered by authority.

b. Scientific Investigation: the Criterion for Judging the Apprehension of God

Loisy's insistence in all his writings was that ~~the critical study of~~ the documents and evidence of the origins of Christianity must be studied without dogmatic presuppositions. The primary aim of his great work The Gospel and the Church was not to attack Harnack (though Harnack's book was the motivation behind Loisy's book) or to defend or interpret Catholic dogma; it was to study the evidence as critically and scientifically as possible:

The aim of the work...is just to catch the point of view of history. In no sense is it an attempt to write an apologia for Catholicism or traditional dogma. Had it been so intended, it must have been regarded as very defective and incomplete, especially as far as concerns the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Church. It is not designed to demonstrate the truth either of the Gospel or of Catholic Christianity, but simply to analyze and define the bonds that unite the two in history.<sup>5</sup>

Harnack had attempted to refute traditional Christianity by appealing to historical and critical study: "What is Christianity? It is solely in its historical sense that we shall try to answer this question here; that is to say, we shall employ the methods of historical science, and the experience of life by studying the actual course of history."<sup>6</sup> In The Gospel and the Church Loisy met Harnack

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5. Loisy, Gospel and Church, pp. 2-3

6. Adolph Harnack, What is Christianity, Second Edition, translated by T.B.Saunders, (New York 1903), p. 7

on his Liberal Protestant ground: he was willing to search in the historical documents available and try to find the nucleus or kernel of the actual historical revelation within them. Therefore, he here approached the problem historically, not analytically, just the way Harnack claimed to approach the matter. The two scholars arrived at very different conclusions.

Loisy first attacked, as an unhistorical a priori assumption, Harnack's reduction of Christianity to one idea: "He finds the essence of Christianity in a sentiment--filial confidence in God, the merciful Father."<sup>7</sup>

Herr Harnack appeals, above all, to facts; he sets forth less a religious philosophy, than a religion, or rather the religion, in the sole unchangeable principle he deems to constitute it; this principle he extracts from the Gospel, and uses it as a touchstone to test the whole Christian development, which is held of worth only in so far as this precious essence has been preserved in it. The whole doctrine of the book is based on this fundamental point; that the essence of the Gospel consists solely in faith in God the father, as revealed by Jesus Christ. On the validity or insufficiency of this principle depends the value of the judgements delivered on the evolution of the Church, of Her dogmas, and of Her worship, from the beginning, and in all the different forms of creed that are founded on the Gospel and the name of Jesus.... Is this really a definition of a historical reality, or merely a systematic method of consideration...? But, is the theory actually deduced from history? Is not history rather interpreted by the light of the theory?<sup>8</sup>

Harnack was himself imitating those who accept the general dogmatic tradition of the Church and bend the texts and facts to their needs.

Likewise, Loisy accused Harnack of modernizing and molding the facts of history to create a Jesus of his liking, omitting all

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7. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 14

8. Ibid., p. 3ff.

the elements of historical evidence which were not congenial or did not fit in with his a priori assumption. Loisy put this amusingly:

It is truly curious to see how embarrassed certain Protestant theologians become over this 'Jewish' conception, which they would willingly eliminate from the Gospel and attribute to apostolic tradition in order to shape themselves a Christ after their own heart. Some have already maintained that the Saviour did not believe Himself the Messiah....Herr Harnack does not go so far. His Christ, the Son who reveals the Divine Goodness, seems to assume the position of Messiah as a kind of costume or disguise suitable for dealing with the Jews....<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Harnack's view of the Kingdom was highly individualistic and mystical and thus, Harnack felt, unhistorical. The same is true of his view of the Son of God.<sup>10</sup> Loisy showed that if history were correctly viewed, the Kingdom would be seen as collective, objective, and future. Loisy's refutation of Harnack on the eschatological issue predates Schweitzer's, and is perhaps better because based on a more critical use of the documents.

It is simply not possible artificially to separate, after the fashion of Harnack, the historical Jesus from the tradition about him: like it or not, "we know Christ only by the tradition, across the tradition, and in the tradition of primitive Christians. This is as much to say that Christ is inseparable from his work....The mere idea of the Gospel without tradition is a flagrant contradiction with the facts submitted to criticism."<sup>11</sup>

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9. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 97

10. Ibid., p. 59; cf. also p. 96: "The Gospel conception of the Son of God is no more a psychological idea signifying a relation of the soul with God than is the Gospel conception of the kingdom. There is absolutely nothing to prove it."

1. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 13

On the historical grounds which Harnack proposed, then, Loisy attacked Harnack's view as unhistorical and unscientific. What then were his own conclusions drawn from scientific and critical study?

c. The Development of Dogma

Loisy believed that Harnack was advancing "his own religion and not that of the Gospel..., when he announces that 'God and the soul, the soul and its God, are the whole contents of the gospel.'"2 His a priori assumption made it necessary for Harnack to reject the whole development of Catholic dogma. Loisy set out to show that such a development was both legitimate and desirable.

If the Church were to propagate the Gospel, a definite form of teaching and expression of Christian experience was necessary, which must be expressed in contemporary terms, changing with each generation. Duchesne had urged Loisy in 1889 to discontinue his studies when he saw they were in conflict with the dogmas of Biblical and ecclesiastical inerrancy. Duchesne held the traditional Roman view of dogma; in Loisy's words "he has always taught that the dogmas of the Church are unimpeachable and immutable."<sup>3</sup> Such was never the view of Loisy, who began, as we have seen, not with dogma, but with critical study. Dogmas, far from being fixed formulae dropped from heaven to be preserved as delivered, were merely the expression at a given time of the Christian experience of Christ. Dogmas arise from the experience of the divine Spirit, and in that sense may be said

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2. Ibid., p. 109

3. Loisy, My Duel, p. 120



derivatively to be of divine origin, but they are stated imperfectly in changeable contemporary human form, structure, and composition. Their value at present depends entirely on whether they express the Christian experience of faith. The impulse proceeding from Christ, his Spirit, may be said to be always the same; the statement of the experience of this impulse in human terms is ever-changing.<sup>4</sup> Dogma thus can never conflict either with the facts of experience or of history, but must be modified so as not to do so.

Such a view obviously conflicted with the Roman view that the teaching of the Church was proved from, built upon, and supported by the verbally inspired New Testament Scriptures. In Loisy's view the Scriptures originated within the Church, and far from the Church's depending on Scripture, they were the statement of the early Church's experience and faith (which affected their historical view) and in that sense dependent upon the Church. And

the Bible, as a human creation, was subject to the inescapable relativity of all works by the hand of man, and so could not be wholly in accord, even in matters of faith and morals, with the truth of any other epoch than the one that fathered it.<sup>5</sup>

This early book of religious experience has been carried into the present by the Church as a uniquely valuable statement, in the temporal context nearest to the historical events of Christ on earth, of the experience of Christ. Loisy avoids both bibliolatrous exaltation of these documents themselves as supernatural, and on the other hand, he clearly sees their immense value and importance in forming our own thought and affecting our own experience:<sup>6</sup> "The Gospel and Christian

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4. cf. especially Loisy, Gospel and Church, pp. 115-16; 276-7

5. Loisy, My Duel, p. 140

6. For this point I am indebted to Paul Sabatier, Modernism (New York 1908), p. 27



tradition are not merely old memories which we are free to consult or let go at will; they are religious experiences which are somehow continued in our own experience, and I will venture to say that we could never succeed in entirely rooting them out of ourselves, even if we could banish them from our recollection."<sup>7</sup>

The Scriptures were not depositories of unchallenged historical evidence for Christianity.<sup>8</sup> They were the events of the life of Jesus seen through the transformed eyes of a community which believed itself to be still experiencing his living presence:

The glory of the risen Lord threw new light on the memories of His earthly career. Thence arose a kind of idealization of His discourses and his acts, and a tendency to systematize them. If the parables, which were really tales concerned in their application only with the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven, are supposed to be full of mysteries, it is because a divine teaching is now seen in them. If the miracles are held to prove that Jesus is the Christ, it is because they are now regarded as acts of Divine omnipotence, beyond all comparison to those God might permit a pious man to do for the succour of his equals. If those possessed of devils hail Jesus as the Son of God, their testimony acquires a special value, coming from Satan, who thus salutes his conqueror. If heaven opens above the head of Jesus at His baptism, it is to hallow the Messiah....<sup>9</sup>

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7. Alfred Loisy, Quelques Lettres (Paris 1908), quoted in Sabatier, Modernism, p. 27

8. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 218: "Nothing is more precarious, from the point of view of the ordinary rules of human reasoning and textual criticism, than certain arguments by which the Gospel is founded on the Old Testament, and the Catholic Church on the whole Bible.... Catholic theologians had a right appreciation of the state of affairs when they laid down the rule that the infallibility of the Church applies to dogmatic definitions, not to the preambles that stated the reasons of them.... A distinction of this kind would be useful for the New Testament, wherein...the independence of the Christian from the Mosaic law is proved by the history of Hagar and Sarah" etc. cf. also Loisy, Memoires, vol. 1, p. 332

9. Ibid., p. 38

As J. S. Bezzant -- no Modernist -- is fond of saying: If a friend of yours who was dead appeared to you after his death and in some sense made you feel his power, you would, as well, see the events of his life transformed with new significance. The Scriptures are thus an interpretation by faith of historical events and therefore doctrinal rather than strictly historical. Never for a moment, however, is there any idea in Loisy's mind that they are an interpretation of nothing, i.e. of events that did not occur! First in Paul, then in Hebrews, finally in the Gospels, "little by little there is formed in the atmosphere of faith, beyond what can be called the historical reality of the Gospel..., the dogma which aims at determining [the historical event's] providential meaning, its universal scope, its transcendent efficacy."<sup>10</sup> The Fourth Gospel is the furthest extent of this tendency in its linking of Christ with creation.

The first thing transformed by the Biblical writers, Loisy believes, are probably the birth narratives, which in their present form are hardly historical.<sup>1</sup> Loisy anticipates all modern thought on the virgin birth by stating that it "has for its immediate end not the miraculous formation of a purely human being, but rather the communication of divine life, which makes Jesus, from the earliest moment of his existence, the elect of God...."<sup>2</sup> He thus puts the alleged virgin birth into focus as a corollary of the Incarnation. The narratives of the childhood of Christ are for the historian only an expression and

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10. Ibid., p. 46

1. cf. Ibid., p. 48

2. Ibid., p. 49

assertion of faith in the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

The Scriptures, addressed to the faithful, are thus an act of faith, a value judgment of certain events. The New Testament is no absolute doctrine but presents us with a picture of living faith which can be seen evolving within its very pages under the influence of the particular surroundings of each author.<sup>4</sup> It is not for criticism to decide if Jesus is or is not the Word Incarnate.<sup>5</sup> The role of the scientific historian is simply to study and analyze as far as he can the antecedents and causes of this phenomenon. For this reason Biblical criticism must always be autonomous, never determined by dogmatic presuppositions. On the other hand the believer will not expect the scientific critic, on the basis of critical investigation alone, to grasp the deep meaning he discovers through the eyes of faith. The Gospel accounts of the empty tomb, the resurrection, and appearances are not irrefutably proven historical events from which any sound historian could conclude the dogma of the Resurrection.<sup>6</sup> The entry of a dead man into immortal life escapes power of historical observation in the first place, but even if it could be observed, it is no longer possible scientifically and historically to establish whether Jesus so entered or not. And, of course, to a scientist any other theory than the Resurrection will always seem a more likely

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3. Ibid., p. 50

4. Idem.

5. Ibid., p. 87

6. Ibid., pp. 131-33

explanation of the disappearance of the body.<sup>7</sup> The divinity of Christ is thus not a fact of history, and could never have been so, even if Jesus had taught it (which he did not).<sup>8</sup> It is a judgment of faith, made by the religious consciousness which is appreciating history, not scientifically recounting history. The divinity of Christ is a dogma of the Church which expresses the Christian belief that Christ is God.<sup>9</sup> "The Christological doctrine is a transcendent explanation of the historical fact."<sup>10</sup>

But just because the early Christians, on account of their present experience, see the events of the past transformed does not mean necessarily that they invent events to satisfy themselves.<sup>1</sup> Loisy did not maintain that Jesus was raised only according to faith and not history. He never cuts dogma loose from its historical origins. He merely pointed out that belief in the Resurrection is an act of faith that cannot be historically demonstrated. The Jesus

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7. cf. Ibid., p. 133: "The critical examination of the narratives will confirm him in his doubt, because it will be impossible for him to reconstitute with sufficient certainty, according to the Gospels and St. Paul, the series of apparitions, in sequence, with the circumstances under which they occurred. The fact of some appearances will seem to him incontestable, but he will be unable to decide their nature and extent with precision. Looked at independently of the belief of the apostles, the witness of the New Testament only supplies a limited probability, hardly proportionate to the extraordinary importance of the fact attested. But is it not inevitable that every natural proof of a supernatural occurrence should be incomplete and defective?"

8. Loisy, Autour, pp. 116-17, quoted in Petre, Loisy, p. 65

9. For this point I am indebted to Vidler, Modernism, pp. 130-31

10. Loisy, Autour, pp. 147-48, quoted in Petre, Loisy, p. 65

1. Even in The Birth of Christianity, translated by L.P.Jacks, (London 1948), p. 69, Loisy says: "Whatever may be said to the contrary, there is not a single Christian document of the first age which does not imply the historicity of Jesus. The Gnostic Docetists who denied the materiality of Christ's body and the physical reality of his passion believed, with the mass of Christians, in the historicity of Jesus and of his appearance as a figure upon earth."

of history and the Lord of faith are distinguished but not separated or divided. Whatever the narrative difficulties and the imaginative representations, "it is beyond question that the faith of the apostles was stimulated by the apparitions that followed the death of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> There is no separation of the faith from the object which is its cause. Jesus is the initial real fact from which dogmatic appreciation springs. And for Loisy, the history was sufficient to justify the dogma of divinity.<sup>3</sup>

Paul's theory of salvation and John's of the eternal Logos, and other Christological developments of dogma were "in the beginning a vital manifestation, a great effort of faith and intelligence, which enabled the Church to link her tradition to the science of the

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2. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 133. cf. also Memoires, vol. 1, p. 464 (quoted in Petre, pp. 65-66): "The Resurrection of Jesus was not the last step of his terrestrial career, the last act of his ministry amongst men, but the first article of the faith of the Apostles and the spiritual foundation of Christianity." Cf. the radical discussion of the Resurrection narratives in The Birth of Christianity, pp. 89-96, where conflicts in the accounts are brought out, and this statement about the apparitions is made on p. 95: "According to the tradition their faith was awakened, or rather created anew by sensible apparitions of Jesus come back to life. It is easy to see that these apparitions, fitted with time and place and given material form in the traditional stories, are based upon visions in which faith was able to find nourishment and confirmation, and for the good reason that faith had created them. It cannot be repeated too often that the object these stories are aimed at is to transform what was essentially an inward conviction, insight, or vision of faith, into an external fact attested by the witness of the senses, and so make the conviction a part of the factual history."

3. At this point some mention should perhaps be made of Loisy's use of the word "myth" which he failed to define. The best discussion is in Petre, Loisy, pp. 69-73. On p. 71 Miss Petre writes: "Now Loisy was a critic and historian, and, for him, a true historical fact was a true historical fact...." There is an immense difference between his treatment of the Christian myth and his treatment of other myths. He criticises certain critics who "attempt to substitute a myth for history, whereas in the /Christian/ religious process the myth becomes the spiritual clothing and expression of the historical fact ...." Cf. also The Birth of Christianity, pp. 10-13 where he heaps scorn on those who say the Jesus never existed.



age."<sup>4</sup> Gentile converts felt the need of interpreting their new faith in their own terms and thus there arose the Greek interpretation of the idea of the Messiah. The concepts of divinity and of Word were the best ways of translating to the Greek mind this idea. Philosophy was employed to give meaning to the tradition, and thus Greek concepts like the Trinity, unknown to primitive Christianity, were used to express the same faith to a different community and time.

The dogmas which "the Church presents are not truths fallen from heaven and preserved by religious tradition in the precise form in which they first appeared."<sup>5</sup> They are the result of laborious effort to state in the changeable philosophical modes of the day the eternal truth and experience of faith. Divine in origin, they are human in substance. The aspirations of faith, "which have infinity as their object, can only become definite in human thought in a finite form. The concrete symbol, not the pure idea, is the normal expression of faith.... The choice and quality of the symbols are necessarily related to the stages of evolution of faith and of religion."<sup>6</sup> But present development is in continuity with the past. As regards dogmatic development, the theory of Vincent of Lerins and the Vatican Council are inadequate to explain the present development of dogma.<sup>7</sup> Dogmas "are not contained in primitive tradition, like a

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4. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 190

5. Ibid., p. 210

6. Ibid., p. 120

7. cf. Loisy, Memoires, vol. 1, p. 35



conclusion in the premises of a syllogism, but as a germ in a seed, a real and living element, which must become transformed as it grows, and be determined by discussion before its crystallization into a solemn formula."<sup>8</sup> Catholic theology has been so preoccupied with the absolute character which dogma derives from its source, the Divine Revelation, that "critics have hardly noticed the relative character that its history makes manifest."<sup>9</sup> And it is most likely that the state of knowledge in the future will require a corresponding development of dogma which will change its outdated external statement, best preserving the fundamental religious significance<sup>10</sup> (which is in continuity with the past) contained in the dogma.

#### d. The Church

For Loisy the obvious place for the necessary development of Christian dogma, in continuity with the past, is the Church. Harnack's a priori assumption made it necessary for him to reject the whole development of the institutional Church, its hierarchy, dogma, ritual, and regard them as a perversion of Jesus' teaching of individual filial relationship with the Father.

Loisy points out that the fact that each of Jesus' own chosen apostles formed his own Church-society shows that Jesus is unlikely to have been anti-institutional. Loisy did not base his

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8. Loisy, Gospel and Church, pp. 213-14

9. Ibid., p. 215

10. Ibid., p. 216

case for the Church on the dubious Petrine texts.<sup>1</sup> Though he may have been inclined to believe them, he was aware that they could be challenged on critical grounds. He felt that the Church grew up as the best way of preserving the Gospel. "The Church can fairly say that, in order to be at all times what Jesus desired the society of his friends to be, it had to become what it has become to save the Gospel by saving itself."<sup>2</sup> And since the preservative factor of any organization is authority, order, and custom, "to reproach the Catholic Church for the development of her constitution is to reproach her for having chosen to live, and that, moreover, when her life was indispensable for the preservation of the Gospel itself."<sup>3</sup> Nor should we expect the Church today to be the same as it was at first. The Church may be compared to a man: it is not possible either to keep a baby a child forever, or once he has become a man to restore him to childhood. To be the religion of Jesus, the Church "has no more need to reproduce exactly the forms of the Galilean Gospel than a man has need at fifty to preserve the proportions, features, and manners of life of the day of his birth, in order to be the same individual."<sup>4</sup> And just as the individual's development is continuous, so "there is nowhere in [the Church's] history any gap in continuity or the absolute creation of a new system: every step is a deduction from the preceding."<sup>5</sup>

The Church, even the cumbrous, slow, humanly-corrupt Church, is the durable society which "can alone maintain equilibrium between tradition, which preserves the heritage of acquired truth, and the

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1. cf. Memoires, vol. 2, p. 168; and Gospel and Church, p. 166

2. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 150

3. Ibid., p. 165

4. Ibid., p. 170

5. Ibid., p. 165

incessant toil of human reason to adapt ancient truth to the new needs of thought and knowledge."<sup>6</sup> It provides the forum in which the religious experience of individuals can be pooled and tempered by being brought together, in prayer and worship, and out of which can come some adequately broad, well-balanced statement of the Gospel in contemporary terms which will be in continuity with the past.

Yet since the Church is human and imperfect, ecclesiastical authority, which is likened to "a ministry of human education...", has no "absolute and unlimited right on the intelligence and conscience of the believers."<sup>7</sup> It is not, contrary to the Roman view, infallible, but is only the least fallible organization fit to promulgate dogma: "the Church does /Loisy means should/ not exact belief in its formulas as the adequate expression of absolute truth, but presents them as the least imperfect expression that is morally possible."<sup>8</sup>

### 3. TYRRELL'S THEOLOGY

Loisy attempted to justify the development of the Catholic Church and its dogma by showing it to be a natural growth from the historical Jesus properly viewed in the light of scientific criticism. Some dogma should be revised, in Loisy's view, because it was incompatible with history as higher criticism viewed it. Tyrrell accepts the views of higher criticism, on the other hand, almost incidentally. His approach is analytical: for him Catholic dogma is

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6. Ibid., p. 223

7. Loisy, Memoires, vol. 1, p. 168, quoted by Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 143

8. Loisy, Gospel and Church, p. 224

justified because it works in practice. It should be reformed where it merely blurs or fails to express humanity's real experience of Jesus. Both distinguish but do not separate the Jesus of history and the Lord of faith. Both begin with the real experience of God. But for Loisy the main interest is the Jesus of history, and he feels that dogmatic development must be compatible with that history. Whereas Tyrrell usually looks at the problem the other way: the Lord of faith is a dogma that best describes the Christian experience so it must be derivable from history.<sup>9</sup>

a. The Revelation of God

Tyrrell, like Loisy, began with the givenness and absolute sureness of the Christian experience of Christ. "The reasons that we give to our minds [for our belief] are but after-justifications of an impulse that derives, not from reason, but from the sympathetic intuitions of the Spirit of holiness."<sup>10</sup> Tyrrell came face to face with the question of just exactly what it was that was revealed in the Christian religion. Loisy had maintained a discreet silence about the traditional idea of a depositum fidei. Tyrrell rejected outright any conception of a depositum fidei as an absolute and concrete body of theological statements from which all future dogmas could be deduced.

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9. He was, of course, in full sympathy with Loisy's position, as is seen in his letter to Dr. Emil Wolff, in M.D. Petre, Life and Autobiography of Tyrrell, vol. 2, pp. 356-57 (dated February 5, 1908): "I think the best description of Modernism is, that it is the desire and effort to find a new theological synthesis consistent with the data of historico-critical research.... For we have reached the time when the new data have broken up the old synthesis; and provided the new syntheses are tentative, provisional, flexible, they are certainly better than chaos and unbelief."

10. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi (London 1907), pp. 208-09

First, his concept of revelation was spiritual. Revelation was made to the whole man, and not in the form of material statements. He spoke often of the "Spirit of Christ" which permeated the whole man: "Religion does not consist in knowing; it does not consist in feeling; it does not consist in willing and doing...; nor is it the sum of all three; but it is life, an operation in which the mind can view now under one, now under another of these aspects. It is not possible to feel with Christ unless we think and will with him, nor to think with him, unless we feel with Him, for the spirit-life is one and indivisible."<sup>1</sup> Thus when he speaks of the Spirit of Christ as a feeling or sentiment, he does not mean any sort of vague Liberal Protestant sentimentalism or emotionalism, but the response of the whole person.<sup>2</sup> Revelation is God communicating his Spirit in the experience of the whole man, which is done in language that is poetic or prophetic, but not scientific. He distinguishes the spiritual apprehension of the whole person from the account of that apprehension in word and thought by the person apprehending:

The explicit account of the actual apprehension<sup>7</sup> can never equal or exhaust, it can easily misinterpret and pervert the concrete mass of perceptions on which the feeling is founded, or rather, with which it is interpenetrated and interwoven. The reasons we give ourselves or others of our likes and dislikes, of our attractions and aversions, of our passions and emotions, are a small part, if any, of the multitudinous reasons, which we cannot give and yet which are acting upon us.<sup>3</sup>

It is the Spirit of Christ Himself, and not some temporary account of its apprehension in time, which is the true *regula fidei*. "It was not for our Divine Saviour to invent so contradictory and

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1. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi (London 1906), p. 16

2. cf. Ibid., pp. 15-17, 20f., 31f.

3. Ibid., p. 17



unserviceable a thing as a final and absolute philosophy and language, and therein embody the inexhaustible meaning of his love...."<sup>4</sup> No human words could ever contain the Spirit, which in words of ours was never completely expressible. We can only abstractly categorize nature; when speaking of the supernature we are in even greater difficulty and must speak in purely analogous terms "with no more exactitude than we would express music in terms of colour."<sup>5</sup> Thus, for Tyrrell, it was always necessary to distinguish between the "substance" of the Creed, i.e. the spiritual apprehension (inexpressible except analogously and anthropomorphically), and the "form" of the Creed, the actual expression of the apprehension. Revelation offers us mysteries of faith. "Theology endeavours to translate from the language of prophecy into that of science, and to harmonize these translations with the whole system of our understanding."<sup>6</sup> "Revelation is to theology what the stars are to astronomy; or what ontological truth is to logical truth. The success or failure of the analysis leaves the fact untouched."<sup>7</sup> Dogma, then, is merely the vehicle of the truth of revelation which comes in the inexpressible apprehension of the Spirit of Christ.

Secondly, Tyrrell's concept of revelation is dynamic and evolutionary, not deductive. This is another ground for his rejection of the static idea of a depositum fidei, which regarded revelation as finally delivered in formulae from which all future dogma was merely

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4. Ibid., p. 19

5. Tyrrell, "The Relation of Theology to Devotion," in Faith of the Millions, First Series, third ed., (London 1904), p. 231

6. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, pp. vii-viii. cf. also Tyrrell, Through Scylla, pp. 107ff.

7. Tyrrell, Through Scylla, p. 264

derived or syllogistically deduced.<sup>8</sup> "Liberal theology, like natural science, has for its subject matter a certain ever-present department of human experience which it endeavours progressively to formulate and understand and which is ever at hand to furnish a criterion for the success of such endeavours."<sup>9</sup> The Spirit of Christ does not change; the ultimate object of our experience is ever the same. But among men on earth this Spirit of Christ is ever being revealed, modified, and hopefully more deeply understood, while its formulation in words constantly changes.

Newman had attempted to reconcile the traditional belief in a depositum fidei with the idea of development, by saying that dogma at present formulated is a clearer elucidation of the delivered depositum fidei. Tyrrell found it impossible to reconcile a true and scientific idea of development with the idea of a depositum fidei from which all future dogma must grow. Historical criticism makes the view impossible that there was a verbal and infallible depositum fidei delivered to the apostles; and the idea of a closed revelation, from which we can only deduce is abhorrent.<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell points out that the Jewish law became a stifling tyranny when it attempted to claim infallibility for all its pronouncements on the basis of Mosaic authorship, so that new enactments had to be deduced from the so-called original depositum fidei. Because of the necessity of deducing their laws from this deposit, later generations were

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8. cf. Tyrrell, Through Scylla, p. 106

9. Ibid., p. 136

1. For fuller discussion of Newman cf. Petre, Autobiography and Life of Tyrrell, vol. 2, p. 209 (letter of Tyrrell to Raoul Gout), and Tyrrell, Through Scylla, p. 149

hampered by legislation no longer necessary or desirable, and their freedom to develop useful laws was hindered. Traditional Catholicism has an equally tyrannous view when it maintains an Apostolic, infallible, and final depositum fidei.<sup>2</sup> "In both cases revelation is conceived as a once-for-all occurrence, for its first and least perfect form is confounded with its substance."<sup>3</sup> The traditional view limited the role of the Spirit merely to that of assisting the rational deduction from the alleged original deposit. Tyrrell shows that the primitive Church itself never considered its utterance of the revelation it received as static and final for all time. The whole spirit of Christianity struck at such legalism:

In the primitive Church prophecy and revelation were an abiding process, nor could any appeal to the past have been understood. The Spirit, i.e. the Risen Christ, spoke daily through the mouth of the prophets. What need to check His present utterances by those of His mortal days? "Lo, I am with you always," he had said. The notion, however, that the prophetic utterances were infallible, final, exhaustive, a rule for all time, never obtained.<sup>4</sup>

Revelation was thus spiritual, impossible to put accurately in material words, and it was evolutionary, ever being made, an abiding process. Yet for the convenience of men, and "because without

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2. cf. M.D. Petre, editor, George Tyrrell's Letters (London 1920), p. 35, (letter to W.R.H.)

3. Ibid., p. 36

4. Idem.

the flesh the spirit is inoperative, silent, and incommunicable,"<sup>5</sup> it was necessary at various points in time to attempt to summarize in words the collective Christian experience of revelation. Tyrrell views the revelation of God in Christ as a sacrament; Christianity is the ideal religion of humanity in that in "words, actions, conduct, and the like, all taken together [we have an] outward expression of ...our hidden spiritual activity."<sup>6</sup> Religious truth is thus clothed in sacramental words, and just as the sacrament apart from the thing signified is of no value, so the letter of dogma is valueless apart from the spiritual and evolving revelation from which it should be derived. So the Christian must always differentiate carefully between the spiritual experience (whether or not through material means) of God, and his own human and material provisional expression of that experience. And the Creed is the material or sacramental statement of our spiritual experience, under the forms of historical and philosophical truth:

Faith were imperilled if theology were an exact, necessary, and adequate intellectual expression or embodiment of faith and if, as such, it came into demonstrable conflict with the indubitable data of history, or science, or philosophy. To realize clearly the often comparatively loose relation between faith and its intellectual

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5. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 2. cf. Tyrrell, "Relation of Theology to Devotion" in Faith of Millions, First Series, p. 228 f.: "A library is of no use unless we can introduce some system or order into its arrangement.... We do not invent these orders, but we find them; and so when we map out the world into categories, we do not invent, but recognize one or other of those arrangements things admit of. [Yet] the ...world at large refuses to be harnessed to our categories, and goes on its rude, unscientific way...."

Yet, cf. Lex Orandi, p. 165: "Between the inward and outward, between the world of reality and the world of appearances, the relation is not merely one of symbolic correspondence. The distinction...implies and presupposes a causal and dynamic unity of the two...."

6. Idem.

expression; to understand that a language derived from, and primarily adapted to, the visible world can never be adequate to the utterance of the invisible, is to have been delivered from a whole brood of idle fears and fancies.<sup>7</sup>

b. The Test of Revelation

But it is obvious that some criterion by which to test the various formulations or expressions of the revealed and experienced Spirit of Christ is essential. Tyrrell believes the right criterion is the pragmatic one: whether a dogma actually expresses the experience of Christ which people have in life, "for the truths of religion, like those of history and science, are directed to life as their end."<sup>8</sup>

Tyrrell makes a common-sense assumption: that there is such a thing as "the religious life" and that it is recognizable as such. (This assumption says nothing about whether the religious life is necessarily desirable or whether religion has as its object of worship anything real.) But there are qualities obvious to the religious life, and Tyrrell believes that dogma may be justly tested by whether it expresses adequately the experience of the religious life and whether in the practice of the religious life the dogma is useful. If a dogma promotes the religious sense<sup>9</sup> in man, it is valuable, and may be so regarded. And just as we reject verbal descriptions of our experience which our minds say are irrational or

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7. Ibid., p. 207

8. Ibid., p.vii

9. cf. Ibid., p. ix: "There can be of course no more question of a separate religious 'faculty' in the old sense, than of a moral faculty." The "religious sense" is defined at length in the first part of Lex Credendi.



unrelated to experience, on the basis of an intellectual criterion, so we reject verbal descriptions of our experiences if they do not express or aid in the promotion of the religious sense in us, on the basis of a pragmatic criterion. Dogma must meet the test of the whole experience of man -- his mind and his conduct -- and must have religious value to justify itself.

Hence the religiously important criticism to be applied to points of Christian belief, whether historical, philosophical, or scientific, is not that which interests the historian, philosopher, or scientist, but that which is supplied by the Spirit of Christ, the spiritus qui vivificat:... what is the belief's/ religious value?<sup>10</sup>

This brings us to the important question of the extent to which Tyrrell was a Pragmatist. It is perhaps first desirable to remark that Tyrrell rejected the title Pragmatist out of hand: "I sympathize with Pragmatism a great deal, but I am not a pure Pragmatist.... I protest against identifying Modernism so much with any evanescent philosophy. We have not escaped the Scylla of scholasticism to fall into the Charybdis of Pragmatism or any other 'ism.'"<sup>1</sup> Pragmatism is difficult to define. In discussing William James' Pragmatism (1907), Tyrrell remarks that "the concept unfolded was that 'the true,' to put it briefly, is only the expedient in our way of thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in our way of behaving.... Writers were tempted to accuse Professor James of inviting people to say, 'God exists,' even when he does not exist....

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10. Ibid., p. 55

1. Letter of Tyrrell to an "Italian professor," April 27, 1908 in Petre, Tyrrell's Letters, p. 116

Professor James justly protests against such a caricature of his views."<sup>2</sup> Tyrrell was uncomfortable with James' definition. James begins with the relativity of truth; propositions are defined as true which at a given time prove useful intellectually and morally. Truth is thus not absolute, nor is it an objective fact which reveals itself. As I pointed out above, Tyrrell begins with the experience of Christ, an objective Christ who is not relative but absolute. He starts with this experience and then goes on to say that this experience, if it is truly expressed, will be intellectually correct and spiritually beneficial; will, in other words, be of religious value to the whole person. Tyrrell went against pure Pragmatism then on two grounds: Christ was the absolute and objective truth and this absolute truth was knowable in religious experience and was not determined by its practical value, though it necessarily had a consequential practical value. But, remembering his distinction between the experience itself and the expression of it, Tyrrell would point out that if these consequences did not result from our expression or statement of the experience of Christ, then the statement was false.

Tyrrell consistently looked at truth as objective and knowable in experience, and thus was ever keenly anxious to repudiate the view that the truth of dogma "means merely 'act as if this were true, and you will act aright'.... That /Truth/ is nothing more than an ethical myth is a position I have repeatedly repudiated."<sup>3</sup> And it is in this

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2. Tyrrell, reviewing the book in The Hibbert Journal, vol. 8, p. 905

3. Lex Credendi, p. 252

light that we are to understand statements such as "the truth of dogma is simply and only practical,"<sup>4</sup> by which he means that we will be truly expressing this experience if our dogmas foster the religious life. Thus he does not start with practical life and ethics and create myths which illustrate or express his truth, but with the objective experience of the truth in Christ. "I have insisted that a belief /i.e. a statement of that experience/ which constantly fosters spiritual life must so far be true to the realities of the spiritual world, and must therefore possess a representative as well as a practical value."<sup>5</sup> And in Lex Orandi he tries to show that the articles of the Creed are both the expression of our experience in the terms of the day (which can analogously<sup>6</sup> represent the action of

4. Idem.

5. Idem.; for a somewhat different and more critical interpretation of Tyrrell's pragmatism, cf. Vidler, Modernism, pp. 169ff. I think Vidler's error lies in his appraisal of this key statement (Lex Credendi, p. 252), in which Vidler seems to take "belief" to mean the experience of the reality of God in Christ, whereas it is clear from the following sentences that Tyrrell is referring to the expression of that experience (as I have indicated in the brackets).

Admittedly, Tyrrell is not always careful or clear in his statements. For example, earlier in Lex Orandi, we find him saying (pp. viii-ix): "No belief can be universally and perpetually useful unless it also be true," which is not, I believe, a considered final statement of his view. In Lex Credendi (which is later) he strongly repudiates the position which the previous sentence above seems to indicate he held: p. xi "Is religion merely, as it undoubtedly is in primitive forms, a means to temporal ends, to personal protection and advantage...? In that case...God is simply viewed as one of the agencies we have to consider in our struggle for physical existence." cf. also Lex Credendi, pp. 41-42 where he rejects Matthew Arnold's philosophy of practicality. cf. also Lex Orandi, p. xxi: "In making religion an instrument of the ideal life, /a man/ is doomed to the inevitable failure which is the penalty of every violation of right order and of eternal will."

6. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 252. Yet "since there may be two analogies of the same truth, whose literal values are contradictory, it follows that the 'law of Prayer' might easily give us very different Creeds of just the same religious value -- all equally true to the needs of the spirit-life, and analogously representative of the spiritual world."

God in our experience), and also that they have a practical value in leading us to the religious life of love. And the representative value of the Creed is related to its practical value: "a Creed has representative value so far as it constantly and universally fosters the spiritual life."<sup>7</sup>

The expression of our experience of Christ (the *lex credendi*), which tends to become abstract, must therefore meet the test of the *lex orandi*, which tests whether it fosters and expresses the life of prayer and devotion. And conversely, the *lex orandi*, which tends to become exaggerated and superstitious, may be tempered by the *lex credendi*.<sup>8</sup> And "there can be no ultimate conflict between what is true for the religious life and what is true for the understanding."<sup>9</sup> When the *lex orandi* is the same as the *lex credendi* the optimum statement of our experience has been achieved. This seems to me the true interpretation of Our Lord's words: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Tyrrell notes "the great and primary importance of conduct as the test of spiritual reality, as the criterion...of doctrine. The 'fruits' to which Christ appealed were 'good works' which men could see. But there is a mere surface seeing, and there is a spiritual discernment that leaps from the outward expression to its true inward significance, that sees the faith through and in the works."<sup>10</sup> It was this spiritual discernment Tyrrell was thinking about when he said:

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7. Ibid., p. 253

8. Tyrrell, "The Relation of Theology to Devotion," in Faith of Millions, First Series, p. 251

9. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 167

10. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, pp. 41-42

It is not by what a man says he believes (or disbelieves), or by what he explicitly and consciously thinks he believes, but by the Faith implicit in his spontaneous life and action and in the whole orientation of his feeling and will that the deep, subconscious convictions of his heart find true utterance.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian could best show forth by his fruits the Christ he experienced. The truth, as Christ indicated, of our words expressing the experience of God, would be illustrated by the fruits of our living.

### c. The Development of Dogma

In viewing the development of Christianity, the obvious starting place is with Jesus and the earliest accounts of his life in Scripture.

Tyrrell never hesitates to affirm the existence of the historical Jesus and the significance of his life, despite his primary concern for the spiritual apprehension of the living Christ today:

It is true that certain religious values depend not merely on ideas and symbols of truth, but on their realization in history. The fiction of heroism can never stir or help me as can the fact. The value of the Gospel is not that it gives us an ideal life, but that the life was actually lived. The historicity of his passion is all important, the factualness of his resurrection equally so. But the mode not equally so. What imports is the triumph of the Gospel through his death.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity is an historical religion; that is to say, it proposes certain historical facts, no less than theoretical statements, for our belief.... Jesus Christ is not a purely ideal creation like King Arthur, but an historical personage; he has a place not only in the world of thought, but also in the world of fact. Our construction of either world must find room for him.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. xiii

2. Petre, Tyrrell's Letters, p. 60 (Letter to von Hugel, Feb. 10, 1907)

3. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 164



The main evidence for those historical facts is in the Scriptures, and the Church has guarded its words, not for the words' sake, but for what the words, in terms of the time in which they were written, were conveying. There was a real revelation of Jesus in history, but, as always Tyrrell distinguished the revelation itself from the statement of it in words, "our faith is in the revealed truth, not in its translation."<sup>4</sup> The Scriptural accounts of Jesus are by men who experienced, after Jesus' death, the same Spirit of the Living Christ which we today experience. The Bible is their record of the manifestation of Christ on earth in history, viewed from the present experience of the risen Christ. They found in retrospect, as they had not so clearly found in Jesus' life time, that in Jesus in history God was perfectly revealed in natural form. They gave their account of this historical revelation in the light of post-Resurrection experience, in the limited vehicle of the language of Galilean fishermen, which is not the (equally limited!) language of modern culture. What we are to be concerned about in the record of this revelation is not the words themselves, but the historical revelation they are trying to convey: the revelation in language and history and time of the infinite and divine Spirit of Christ. The Gospels can thus be called the *fontes salvationis*, as "the rude vehicle and embodiment of the first, fullest, and supremely authentic manifestation of the Spirit of Christ."<sup>5</sup> Those presently experiencing the Spirit of Christ will experience in this vehicle of scattered utterances and reminiscences a revelation of the Spirit of Christ:

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4. Petre, Tyrrell's Letters, p. 59 (Letter to von Hugel, Feb. 10, 1907)

5. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 20

Whatever the philosophical or theological deficiencies of the language in which Christ had to speak to the fishermen of Galilee, yet they could not hinder the revelation of his spirit, of that feeling with which the purest of all human hearts reverberated to the love of the Divine Heart symbolized in the work of the Divine Hands -- a feeling that enwrapped a philosophy which no categories shall ever compass; a love kindled by a glance from that Love which is the Root and Reason of all things.<sup>6</sup>

This concrete, colored, and imaginative expression of the Spirit of Christ is both the classical statement of *lex credendi-lex orandi*, and also it is normative in that it tests all future statements of *lex credendi-lex orandi*.

But certain concrete and historical events enter the credal summary of the Biblical accounts, and Tyrrell was no less aware than Loisy that historical events must be tested by the latest critical methods, without reservation.<sup>7</sup> "Precisely as historical facts they concern the historian and must be criticised by his methods."<sup>8</sup> But he goes on to observe that "as matters of faith they must be determined by the criterion of faith, i.e. by their proved religious values as universally effectual of spiritual progress."<sup>8</sup> He thus distinguishes, in historical statements about Jesus, between their historical and religious value. And in saying that "it is only for the sake of the religious value that the Church interests herself in history,"<sup>9</sup> Tyrrell is but repeating a truism of modern philosophy of history: that historians pick and choose among the facts of history, giving significance to some, on the basis of a certain criterion presently

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6. Ibid., p. 15

7. cf. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 253

8. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, pp. 168-69

9. Ibid., p. 172

felt which finds certain facts interesting and significant.

Tyrrell then proceeds to investigate the historical truth of the Bible and creeds. He admits the possibility that, with their experience of the Risen Christ, the Evangelists "might conceivably have been inspired to reveal /Jesus/ in such fact-founded fictions as would best characterize and portray his personality to those who knew it not. Such literary devices were in no wise disreputable at a time when they were recognized and expected."<sup>10</sup> This is a rather careless statement of what Tyrrell expressed better in another context: "Historical fiction may be truer to inward reality than historical fact."<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell is willing to admit such a possibility, though note his expression "fact-founded."

Tyrrell's own view is not that the Creed is a parable (in the literal sense of an unhistorical fiction) but that the Creed expresses truth both historical and religious. The articles of faith expressed in the Creeds "claim a double truth; a correspondence both to the lower and higher order of reality"<sup>2</sup>-- they claim both historical and religious truth, and must be tested in both categories. "Thus /for example/ the Ascension of Christ may be viewed both as a fact of history and as a symbol of His spiritual exaltation."<sup>3</sup> And Tyrrell rests in the hope that "the unity of all experience forbids any ultimate contradiction between the results of these separate criteria /the historical and religious/"; but it does not exclude the possibility

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10. Ibid., p. 178

1. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 13

2. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 4

3. Ibid., p. 5

of superficial and temporary contradictions."<sup>4</sup>

In the light of this view he discusses various articles of Christian belief. Among those articles presented as historical events is the Resurrection. St. Paul, Tyrrell believes,<sup>5</sup> does not make the historical fact of Christ's bodily rising the central object of belief, and no one passes from the historical evidence for the Resurrection to belief in Christian claims. The evidence presented in Scripture is highly dubious: the appearances are witnessed only by interested parties, and any other explanation than a resurrection would seem more likely to a scientific scholar viewing the empty tomb. The classical text (1 Corinthians 15) suggests, indeed, that Paul was not trying to prove the living Christ from the Resurrection, but the Resurrection from the living Christ. While the difficulty for Paul with the Resurrection seems to have been what kind of body Christ rose in, our difficulty is rather with the "undue weight attached to the physical re-embodiment, to the miraculous properties of the Resurrection body; in an apparent materialization of the conception of spiritual glory, altogether uncongenial to the whole trend of the Gospel...."<sup>6</sup>

But Tyrrell justifies it as being

in close keeping with the whole economy of the Incarnation, which translated the invisible will-world into terms of the visible sense-world;... so Christ, after a life of labour and suffering culminating in death, should rise according to the body to a more glorious state of bodily life.... A merely ghostly resurrection would have given

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4. Ibid., p. 168-69

5. Ibid., pp. 182ff.

6. Ibid., p. 183

impulse to this mischievous fashion of thought /the separation of the bodily and spiritual/, as well as to a Docetan denial of the veritable... manhood of Christ....Whatever the body be, it belongs to the integrity of human nature.<sup>7</sup>

Tyrrell's treatment of the Ascension is not consistent.

Again, he looks at the doctrine for its historical and religious truths; the mere fact, for example, of the catching up of a body into the clouds is of no religious value unless it symbolizes something.<sup>8</sup> We noted above his view that the Ascension is an historical fact as well as a religious truth. At other times he regards it not quite so simply, but still not necessarily as an unhistorical event:

Here the event viewed as a visible fact is more plainly an accommodation to human modes of thought, more obviously a bit of symbolism valuable not for its own sake but for the sake of its religious significance.... We cannot suppose that 'ascent' means more here than 'descent' in the previous article; although here the idea seems to have been translated into appearances accommodated to the popular imagination of Heaven as the locality outside the concentric several spheres whereof this earth is thought to be the core.<sup>9</sup>

At his most skeptical Tyrrell denied that the accounts of the Resurrection and Ascension were in many details historical scientifically:

In the first place the story of the Ascension was not the earliest expression of the simple truth of Christ's moral exaltation. It was a gross materialization and obscuring of that truth which we are only now learning to dematerialize and restore....<sup>10</sup>

The symbolism of the story, which expressed a great religious truth,

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7. Ibid., p. 184-85

8. cf. Ibid., p. 189: "To narrate these wonders as wonders, and not as fraught with spiritual sense, is the character of pseudo-Gospels."

9. Ibid., p. 187

10. Petre, Tyrrell's Letters, p. 64 (Letter to A.F., November 22, 1908)



was only temporary, and it was the truth itself which must be preserved. His final dealing with the historicity of the accounts of the Resurrection and Ascension, show the turmoil of his own mind on the subject:

We should ask: Are we truly interpreting the meaning that the symbol strove imperfectly to express? I think we might say so of the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. But then if we can express it more clearly, why adhere to the symbol? 'When that which is perfect is come, etc.'; We do not need a dark glass when we see face to face. Altogether it seems to me a very complex problem.<sup>1</sup>

The last sentence expresses the whole truth of the modern dilemma.

#### d. The Church

There was no doubt in Tyrrell's mind what was the proper place for the development of doctrine. For him the truth of experience was expressed but imperfectly in dogma, and the test of an expression of this experience was whether it issued in fruits in practice. The *lex credendi* was tested by the *lex orandi*. But Tyrrell rejected any individualistic interpretation of such a view, maintaining that Catholicism was distinguished from Protestantism by its belief that "the united body of the faithful is the organ of the development of Christian truth."<sup>2</sup> "No man can take his own subjective and separate experience as a sufficient test: 'securus judicat orbis terrarum.'<sup>3</sup> For Tyrrell, the ultimate criterion by which to judge true and false development was the Spirit of Christ found in the individuals in the Church, "the saints, i.e. those who possess the discerning Spirit of

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1. Ibid., p. 62 (Letter to G.E. Newsom, November 17, 1908)

2. Tyrrell, writing under pseudonym Hilaire Bourdon, The Church and the Future (privately printed, without location, 1903), p. 3. cf. p. 33: "The essence of the Catholic, as opposed to the Protestant position, lies in accepting the Church rather than the Bible as the ultimate authority in religion."

3. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 62

Christ, the true *regula fidei*."<sup>4</sup> In the Church, the revelations of the Spirit of Christ, always true, never complete to each individual, always fallible and changeable in utterance, expression, and interpretation, are collected, corrected by, and utilized for mutual benefit. He adopts a kind of non-quantitative Vincentian canon: "Beliefs that bring forth the fruit of holiness and charity more or less abundantly just in the measure that they are lived and practiced; that do so with a certain universality, at all times i.e. on all occasions<sup>7</sup>, in all places, in all men, are thereby shown to be natural or true to the Spirit of Christ."<sup>5</sup> So the Church provides a standard by which to judge, and a school in which to educate, our individual expression of our experience.

The Church to which the historical revelation was made and which wrote the account of that revelation, was apostolic, not because it depended on a deposit of dogmas made to the apostles, but because it possessed "equal authority with Christ and his apostles, as being the embodiment and collective incorporation of the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

It was by stressing this point that Tyrrell advanced a view of ecclesiastical inerrancy different from both the traditional Roman view<sup>7</sup> and from Loisy's theory that the actual developments of

4. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. 20; cf. pp. x-xi

5. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 62

6. Petre, Letters of Tyrrell, p. 36 (Letter to W.R.H.)

7. cf. Tyrrell under pseudonym Bourdon, Church and Future, p. 192: "As has been said, the 'liberalism' of this re-statement of Catholicism lies not in an attempt to reconcile the data of science and history with dogmas by giving to these latter a sense which their framers would have repudiated, but in a frank abandonment of the 'official' in favour of a broader theory of ecclesiastical inerrancy; in a modification of our view of the Church's infallibility parallel to, and dependent on, that which we are forced to adopt in regard to the sacred Scriptures."

institution and dogma were the work of the indwelling Christ. "It is as to faith and morals," Tyrrell maintains, "that the Scriptures and traditions of the Christian Church claim to be divinely guided into all truth, as it were, by an unerring Spirit or sentiment, which selects and casts aside such materials as are offered by the thought and language of each age and people for its embodiment, a Spirit which itself unchanged, changes the fashion of its outer garb to suit every variety of custom and tradition."<sup>8</sup> Institutions and dogmas were ever temporary human expressions and thus fallible. The Church's infallible depositum fidei was not any dogmatic expression but was the living Spirit of Christ Himself. It was in possessing this Spirit that the "slowly forming...mind of the living Church of all times and places, of which the Creed<sup>9</sup> is the only authorized expression, was<sup>7</sup> divinely guided."<sup>10</sup>

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8. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 53

9. cf. Tyrrell, Lex Orandi, p. 60: "The Creed is but the record of the gradual unraveling of the meaning of that experience through the collective spiritual labour of the Church, guided by the Spirit of Christ into all truth." cf. also Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. x.

10. Tyrrell, Lex Credendi, p. xi. But cf. Petre, Life and Autobiography of Tyrrell, vol. 2, p. 377 (Letter to V. of January 18, 1909) for Tyrrell's occasional despair on the matter: "A long talk with Hensley Henson yesterday about the Church of England. I am afraid things are very hopeless there. Houtin and Loisy are right, the Christianity of the future will consist of mysticism and charity, and possibly the Eucharist in its primitive form as the outward bond. I desire no better."

#### 4. VON HUGEL'S THEOLOGY

The heart of the thought of the person whom Gore called "the most learned man living"<sup>1</sup> is to be found in his greatest work The Mystical Element of Religion, of which William Temple said, "It is very arguable that this is the most important theological work written in England during the last half century."<sup>2</sup> Baron von Hugel -- German, cautious,<sup>3</sup> diplomatic, religious -- was responsible, in the introduction of this work (Second Edition, pp. 50-82), for perhaps the most profound insight into religious thought in our time. It was an insight so simple, so obvious, and now so widely accepted, that we can scarcely imagine religious thought without it. This was, of course, his concept that for any religion to be both full and living, it must have three elements in careful balance: the mystical and intuitive, the intellectual and rational, and the institutional and historical. Temple is not overstating, I think, when he says: "His statement of the necessity of each of these, and the consequent need to harmonize and balance them, is unanswerable."<sup>4</sup>

##### a. The Transcendence of God and the Givenness of Religion

For von Hugel the essence of religion was its givenness, and

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1. Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. xi

2. From an article in the Guardian after von Hugel's death, quoted in Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 223

3. Miss Petre, though clever and amusing, is wrong when she remarks in Loisy, p. 31: "von Hugel was cautious and he was also correct. Loisy was, on the whole, correct, but he was only cautious in detail, not in his general policy; and Tyrrell, of course, was neither cautious nor correct."

4. Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 223

at the basis of all his thought was the conviction that in religion, "revealed" or "natural," it was God who was acting and not man.

Religion, even more than all other convictions that claim correspondence with the real, begins, proceeds, and ends with the Given--with existences, realities, which environ and penetrate us, and which we have always anew to capture and to combine, to fathom and to apprehend; all this as...stimulated and sustained by the tenacious conviction that a real, if dim, 'confused' knowledge of reality is with us already prior to all our attempts to analyze or completely to synthesize it.<sup>5</sup>

He finds this predominant stress on the givenness of God in the Father, especially in Augustine, and thus in method of approach to religious study he seeks to follow them. He notes the contribution of the scholastic period, particularly Aquinas, however, in religious philosophy. The Middle Ages deepened our understanding of man by dwelling not so much on sin and redemption as on the natural and supernatural: "Man is here found not primarily wicked, but primarily weak; and man requires...to be raised to a new, a supernatural, level and kind of motives, habits, achievements, and beatitudes."<sup>6</sup> Yet he notes that for Aquinas the soul is just as dependent upon Grace and Prayer as it is for Augustine. It is God who initiates knowledge of himself and it is he who has the power to continue us in that knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

He rejects Feuerbach's view that the mind of man can only have knowledge of one reality: itself alone; and this mind is the subject which perceives only itself as object, though it often

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5. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses in the Philosophy of Religion, Series One (London 1921), p. xiii

6. Ibid., p. xv

7. B. Holland, ed., Selected Letters of Baron von Hugel (London 1928), pp. 157-160 (Letter to C.C.J. Webb, March 20, 1909)



illusively takes the supposed object for something else, i.e. God.<sup>8</sup> For von Hugel the objective existence of God is absolutely crucial, and he cites Feuerbach's own later life as evidence of the difficulty of costly love of fellow man by a person without superhuman beliefs.<sup>9</sup> Von Hugel believed that in the religious experience man perceived the reality of God -- an object transcendent<sup>10</sup> and outside himself which chooses to make itself known. Taking an analogy from science, he seeks to show that the reality of this object is essential:

Not only religion but geology, but astronomy, depend for our enjoyment of them primarily on our sense, upon our feeling, of the real distinction of the real objects from ourselves and yet of our genuine apprehension of them! Try and prove, if you will, that religion is untrue; but do not mislead yourself and others as to what constitutes its power and worth.<sup>1</sup>

Von Hugel quickly qualifies his position by asserting that this experience of the Perfect and Spiritual is discernible to men and expressible by them only in human and natural terms. He thus distinguishes, as Loisy and Tyrrell, between the object itself and the object as we explain it in worldly terms, between the experience itself of the real and our description of it, and "between even this experience

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8. In Essays, Series One, pp. 32-34, von Hugel quotes Feuerbach's book on the essence of religion: "Consciousness of God is self-consciousness....What was formerly worshiped as God is now perceived to be something human."

9. Ibid., p. 42

10. Petre, Loisy, p. 35 has commented: "The question of transcendence, as against immanentism, began to obsess the Baron's mind to such point as certainly to misunderstanding on the part of other friends as well as Loisy."

1. von Hugel, The Reality of God; and Religion and Agnosticism (London 1931), p. 5

and the great Reality thus experienced and revealed."<sup>2</sup> Von Hugel regards science as an absorbed study of an object by the subject who is sufficiently detached from his own petty concern gradually to allow the object to become clear to him. But he distinguished a specifically religious experience, which alone was able to give us "revelation at its fullest, not only as to Revelation's content [as science could], but as to Revelation's form."<sup>3</sup> For religion is the perfect revelation of the Spirit which informs all, which indeed first moves men and enables them to apprehend what is revealed.

Nor was von Hugel even willing that religion should be identified with morality or with a thirst for moral perfection:

I feel confident that the two are not, at bottom, the same thing, nor even different stages of the same thing....Religion, I feel more and more, is (in contrast with ethics) essentially concerned with what already is and most speedily will be, and with what is indeed environing and penetrating man ever on and on, but yet as super-human, other than simply human, as truly transcendent, and not only immanent. I think that A. C. Taylor in his Problem of Conduct /he means A. E., 1901/ and others have recently brought into striking prominence this 'Is-ness' of Religion, as against the 'ought-ness' of morals....No amount of Oughtnesses can be made to take the place of Is-ness.<sup>4</sup>

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2. von Hugel, Essays, Series One, p. 63. cf. also Ibid., pp. 266-69: "Hence there exists a certain legitimate distinction between, on the one hand, these Realities themselves and the faith of the faithful concerning them, and, on the other hand, the analysis and theory of the theologians concerning this faith. There exists indeed a very real relation between Facts, Faith and Theology, but the relation is not one of sheer identity. The Realities themselves change not: the Faith, the life in them change not: only our understanding, our articulation of the Facts and of the Faith grow and indeed adapt themselves more and more to this abiding Faith and to these persistent Facts, yet they do so in and through categories of thought which more or less vary across the centuries."

3. Ibid., pp. 55-57

4. Holland, ed., Selected Letters of von Hugel, p. 174 (letter of von Hugel to Malcolm Quin, November 17, 1909)

What was the truth that was revealed in the religious experience? Von Hugel rejected the views of those like W. G. Ward who saw truth as a clearly delineated area inside which was safety and outside which was error and danger. Von Hugel saw truth or reality as "light, in its center blindingly luminous, having rings around it of lesser light, growing dimmer and dimmer until we are left in outer darkness."<sup>5</sup> This was no easy definition of truth -- the mind seeking truth must be prepared to stumble and stammer, constantly trying to grope from fringe light to the central light.

This analogous expression of the experience of the transcendent God by us in degrees of vividness is rather like that of C. S. Lewis in Surprised by Joy. The analogy reveals von Hugel's method as analytic rather than historical or genetic. Not only does he maintain that we can never be sure of the exact historical origins of Christianity, but he doubts that it is a sound principle to try to explain truth in terms of its origin. "Father Tyrrell used to say very strikingly that we poor mortals know only the middle of things -- both their first beginnings and their ultimate ends are and remain unknown to us."<sup>6</sup> We commence with our present experience of something real, and

however helpful as hypothesis, however fruitful, even in more or less isolated facts, evolution of a wise and critical kind has proved and will prove to be, it nevertheless remains a leading fact that there is no making our knowledge of beginnings as certain in its details as can be our knowledge of what we actually now hold in our hands and what surrounds us on all sides.<sup>7</sup>

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5. von Hugel, Reality of God, p. 33. cf. also letter of von Hugel to A. Thorold, 15 Aug. 1921, in Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 330

6. von Hugel, Reality of God, pp. 27-28

7. Ibid., p. 28

We proceed from the known to the unknown, from the partial towards the complete. At present we experience the immanence of God in the natural world, though the experience tells us that He is truly transcendent. Von Hugel has an Aristotelian view of the reality of the particular and the accidental, which is inseparable from the universal which it is in some sense expressing. We experience the Light in the dim reflections of it in the world; we experience the transcendent God as he is immanent in the world.<sup>8</sup> Thus the place where the search for the Light of the transcendent God takes place is on earth. Von Hugel thereby repudiates the normal mystical approach to God which viewed the soul as turning away from the impure particularity of the world and by abstraction to absorption into the pure simplicity of God. His own view is that God has given us in the concrete particularity of the world a real medium to Himself. For

God, I like to think with Lotze, is the supremely concrete, supremely individual and particular; and the mental and practical occupation with the particular must ever remain an integral part of my way to Him. And this squares so grandly with the whole sacramental doctrine and practice of the Church. One gets otherwise into a neo-Platonic depersonalizing of the soul.<sup>9</sup>

For von Hugel the material was always a medium, but was never divine itself except as it led to the divine. It was never a discovery of a spiritual element in common things, but it was the experience of a distinct, personal, objective transcendent God by means of the common.

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8. cf. Ibid., p. 45 and p. 187; also cf. Dakin, von Hugel, pp. 46-49

9. Holland, ed., Selected Letters, pp. 73-74 (letter of von Hugel to Tyrrell, 26 September 1898)

...Because Spirit, God, works in our midst and in our depths, we can and do know him; because God has been the first to condescend to us and to love us, can we arise and love him in return.<sup>10</sup>

Such a view did indeed "square so grandly" with the sacramental approach of the Church. And von Hugel's whole life may be said to have centered on the Eucharistic Sacrament: Dom C. Butler has noted:

We always returned home by way of the little Catholic Church in Holly Place -- it was his daily practice -- and went in for a long long visit to the Blessed Sacrament; and there I would watch him sitting, the great deep eyes fixed on the Tabernacle, the whole being wrapped up in an absorption of prayer, devotion, contemplation. Those who have not seen him so know only half the man.<sup>1</sup>

b. The Criterion for Judging the Givenness of God in Experience

Von Hugel, though he asserted the primacy of the individual experience of the reality of God, always realized that the individual was limited. The alleged revelation of God in history in Jesus Christ and the present individual and collective experience of the living Spirit of God must both be checked by the intellectual faculties men possess. Nedoncelle has noted:

Von Hugel's thought is rooted in Catholic mysticism. Above all it springs from a faith fully accepted and lived with enthusiasm. Yet such faith is willing to justify itself to men, and it is here that it differs from pure mysticism. In this respect the Baron is not the Karl Barth of the Roman Church.<sup>2</sup>

Von Hugel asserted, as strongly and uncompromisingly as Loisy, the absolute necessity of critical study of the historical documents of Christianity. In November 1902, for example, he wrote

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10. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Series One, p. 57

1. Dom C. Butler, Religious Authority and the Religion of the Spirit, pp. 179-85

2. Maurice Nedoncelle, Baron Friedrich von Hugel (translated by Marjorie Vernon), (London 1937), p. 172



Loisy: "I have now just read your anti-Harnack to page 140. It is just simply superb."<sup>3</sup> Christianity -- the immanence of the transcendent God -- was rooted in history, without which Christianity was simply illusion. And all historical occurrences were open to criticism and investigation of the most vigorous sort. Though evidence for historical occurrences could never be absolute in a scientific sense, yet von Hugel insisted that "a certain nucleus of historical happenings is absolutely essential to the Christian faith."<sup>4</sup> It is, of course, true that any religion must be factual and historical, but this is especially true for Christianity which centers on the Incarnation in history of the Divine.

Certainly the religion of the Incarnation will be able consistently to despise happenings, however lowly, and the study of happenings, however minute, only if and when it does not sufficiently realise its own abiding implications and requirements, its rootedness in the childhood at Nazareth and in the cross at Calvary.<sup>5</sup>

Only a false mysticism denied the necessity of clock time. Our souls could only be moved and wakened to the spiritual by contingent

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3. Loisy, Memoires, vol. 1, p. 333 (letter of von Hugel to Loisy of November 15, 1902), quoted Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 144. A change of tone, but not of sympathy can be seen in Holland, ed., Selected Letters, p. 177, (letter to Edward Talbot April 2, 1910).

4. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Series One, p. 268. cf. also Bedoyere's translation of von Hugel's Qunzaine (June 1904), in Bedoyere, von Hugel, pp. 165-66.

5. Ibid., pp. xv-xvi. cf. p. xvi for "natural religion": "In actual life Natural or Rational Religion or Pure Theism exists as a mirage after the setting, or as the dawn before the rising, of Historical Religion. And such historical religion always claims to be, not rational but revelational, and not natural but supernatural; and such a religion is never purely theistic, but always clings to a Prophet or Revealer of God and to a community which adores God and worships the Revealer."

and historical stimuli -- by the eternal manifested in time.<sup>6</sup> And unless Christianity rested on historical events it was an illusion:

Though the great central figure -- Our Lord, and the main events of his life and teaching, death and apparitions -- require, for the integrity of Catholicism, to be not only spiritual truths but factual happenings, it does not follow that the same is necessarily the case with every truth and doctrine concerning Him. Certainly the Descent into Hell is now conceived...not in the directly, simply factual way in which it was understood in early times....<sup>7</sup>

Von Hugel is confident that "God has seen to it and will continue to see to it that sufficient historical evidence for such a sufficient nucleus will remain at man's disposal on and on."<sup>8</sup> Since it is God who is doing the revealing, we can only believe and hope his revelation in history will suffice: it is therefore on God that we depend for a fulness of revelation, not on the authority of man, men, or group of men in the Church. Faith pushes us ahead in search for the Truth in God's sufficient revelation of it.<sup>9</sup>

No less than Tyrrell, did von Hugel see that the dogma which expressed the revelation of God in history and the present experience of Him in the Spirit must adequately express that experience, as well as the actual history. It must also have religious value in promoting the continuation of that experience. Von Hugel wrote Tyrrell, in his most important writing "The Relation of Theology to Devotion":

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6. cf. Ibid., Series Two, pp. 53-54

7. Ibid., Series One, pp. 239-40

8. Ibid., p. 268

9. cf. "The Church and the Bible," Dublin Review, Oct. 1894, pp. 317-19

...I want to thank you at once, most gratefully, for the proofs of 'The Relation of Theology to Devotion' article....They strike me as the finest thing you have yet done....It is really splendid.... It is of course a deep encouragement to me...to find you giving such crystal clear expression of my dearest certainties....<sup>10</sup>

The combined intellects of individuals must try to express individual experiences, correct them by comparing them to other individual experiences, and judge them in the light of reason.

The test to which men must put the formulations of their experience is a pragmatic one:

The right and proper test for the adequacy of abstractions and of spatial, numerical, mechanical relations is, indeed, clearness and ready transferableness; but...the appropriate test for the truth concerning existence and realities is vividness (richness), and fruitfulness. The affirmations which concern abstractions and relations may be ever so empty and merely conditional....The affirmations which concern existence and realities may be ever so dim and difficult to transmit; if they are rich and fruitful, they are appropriate and true.<sup>1</sup>

But, no more than for Tyrrell, is this a blind pragmatism which says the true is the useful. Von Hugel attempts to meet pragmatism on its own ground by showing that if all our mental and spiritual lives are determined by practical motives, even science loses its objectivity. And likewise, because a belief is useful (as Christianity), does not in the least mean that it is artificially or humanly created: "Thus with a magnifying glass I can capture enough heat from the rays of the sun to boil an egg in a few seconds, but I shall not be so

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10. Holland, ed., Selected Letters, p. 77 (von Hugel to Tyrrell, Oct. 8 1899)

1. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Series One, p. 105

foolish as to conclude from this that the sun's nature and end is to be my egg-boiler!"<sup>2</sup> For von Hugel -- always -- the beginning is the experience of God which is given, and von Hugel merely says that our expression of this is tested by its usefulness in deepening that experience, in bringing it to greater richness and fruitfulness.

The events in history which Christianity alleges to have occurred (and without the occurrence of which Christianity is an illusion) must thus be tested by every rational and critical means. And the dogmatic statement of the experience of the living Spirit at present, which derives from these events, must adequately describe that experience in such a way as to deepen the understanding of it and enable its fruits to be harvested.

#### c. The Development of Dogma

It is perhaps because, unlike Loisy and Tyrrell, his main interests did not lie in a thorough study of the life of Christ in its relation to the whole historical development of Christian dogma, and because he was a layman, that von Hugel avoided condemnation by the Roman Church. It would be a mistake, therefore, in a summary of his thought, too extensively to investigate his views on this subject which are largely diplomatic restatements of Loisy and Tyrrell.

"Du Christ Eternel et de Nos Christologies Successives"<sup>3</sup> and his article on St. John's Gospel (made famous by its appearance in the Encyclopaedia Britannica) are his main pronouncements in this field

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2. von Hugel, Reality of God, pp. 38-39

3. In La Quinzaine (Paris), 1 June 1904, pp. 285-312

and both must be corrected by random comments in his major works. Neither article is in the mainstream of his writing.<sup>4</sup>

Von Hugel largely contrasts the Synoptics (which do justice to Jesus' humanity, his growth, his limitedness) with John (who tries to do justice to the divine nature of Christ.) The Synoptics are thus more concerned with factual events and human biography, while John dwells more on the supernatural significance than on historical accuracy, more on the eternal Christ than on the Jesus of time. He largely follows Loisy's view of the Fourth Gospel,<sup>5</sup> though his view of the Synoptics is more conservative.<sup>6</sup>

One of von Hugel's objects is to bring out the oft-slighted concrete humanity of Jesus, and he frequently points out that Jesus was subject to change, growth, and the characteristics of the Jewish race:

No doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, no affirmation, even of just simply the normality of the mind of Jesus, are other than out of touch with all the real possibilities of the question, if they do not first recognise that a real Incarnation of God in man can only mean Incarnation in some particular human nature....The Incarnation, even by Himself, could not be made other than by the entering into, and possession of, a human mind and will endowed with special racial dispositions and particular racial categories of thought.... [This person's] truth and insight would of necessity show, to minds and hearts of other races and times, imaginative and emotional peculiarities -- certain omissions, combinations, stresses, outlines, colourings, characteristic of the race and time

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4. In this section I am in debt to Nedoncelle's brilliant book Baron Friedrich von Hugel throughout. Nedoncelle has, however, attempted to keep the Baron closer to traditional Roman views than he really was.

5. Which he does not believe is by John the Son of Zebedee

6. cf. esp. Mystical Element, vol. 1, pp. 341ff. and Eternal Life, p. 62. Loisy and Schweitzer, he believes, have exaggerated the eschatological element.



of the Revealer. Otherwise, the Revealer would begin His career by being simply unintelligible to His first hearers,...and in himself not be normally, characteristically man.<sup>7</sup>

Von Hugel carefully hedges on the question of the limitedness of Jesus, however, and though he admits that Jesus conceives of the parousia, in Jewish fashion, as sudden, earthly, and soon (in which case Jesus was, at best, ignorant) von Hugel shows that Jesus balances this with teaching on the eternity of God and a final future day for individual souls whose reward will be heaven or hell. He will only speak of Jesus as "non-infallible" and leaves open the question of the effect of the divinity on the humanity which we can only try to estimate from investigation of historical evidences. Such investigation led von Hugel to this basically ambiguous position:

Now this information, taken thus, ruins the old deductions and positions, in two respects. For it turns out not to be true that human nature, in its fullest purity and perfection, is exempt from mental growth, struggle and obscurity, from dim and partially mistaken gropings and guesses....And, again, it is not true that even that unique union with, and penetration by, the Divinity, which we historical Christians hold and proclaim to exist in Our Lord's Humanity, abolishes these or any characteristics which are essential to human nature as finite....But note that we do not, by any such admission, cease from holding a glorious central, spiritual and moral inerrancy of insight and instinct in our Blessed Lord's teaching and life.... 'Thou hast the words of eternal life': indeed He has.<sup>8</sup>

Von Hugel clearly wishes to acknowledge a normal human development of consciousness, but his position on the "non-infallibility" of Jesus is hardly satisfactory: the evidence leads him to feel Jesus was wrong

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7. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Series One, p. 125

8. Ibid., Series Two, p. 21

about the parousia, in which case it is necessary to admit that Jesus could have been wrong elsewhere, which is a position he is loath to admit. The thorny eschatological issue plagued him and he sought, as a way out, to show that Jesus did not know when the parousia was coming and thus conceived of it as sudden and near, a view which showed Jesus rather to lack knowledge than positively to err.<sup>9</sup> Such a view scarcely solves the difficulty, for, whether through ignorance or positive error, Jesus' view was incorrect, and this has implications for everything Jesus taught. Only at the end of his life did von Hugel arrive at what may be termed a valuable ambiguity: "I cannot completely understand the great doctrine of the Parousia.... Our Lord sees something. I do not clearly see what. He is beyond me."<sup>10</sup>

Von Hugel ever clung to the Chalcedonian definition, with its idea of hypostatic union of the divine and human in Christ. Though it had been abused in the past to accent the divinity of Christ, and though von Hugel sought to bring out the real humanity of Our Lord, he believed that the Creed's greatness lay in its balance of the divinity and humanity which enabled the full statement of both.

Like Loisy, von Hugel distinguished, but did not separate, the Jesus of history and the Lord of faith. The Jesus of history must be sought with utmost rigour. Von Hugel uncompromisingly insisted on absolute freedom for Roman Catholic scholars in their scientific researches, rejecting Blondel's view in Histoire et Dogma (1904) which

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9. cf. Bernard, ed., Selected Letters, p. 159 (Letter of von Hugel to C.C.J. Webb, March 20, 1909)

10. A conversation with his niece reported in The Dublin Review, April 1931, pp. 257-58.

advocated a via media between traditional orthodoxy and the Modernist view that historical criticism must be treated as an autonomous science.<sup>1</sup> He likewise rejected Blondel's view that dogmatic statements of the experience of the Risen Christ should be regarded as significant, along with historical research, in our drawing up of a clear picture of the historical Jesus. Von Hugel championed the role of criticism: in Vidler's words "Christian experience of the eternal Christ rightly assists us to determine the significance which attaches to the life of the historic Christ, but it can neither add to, nor detract from, our knowledge of the actual events of his life."<sup>2</sup> In "Lex Eternal et Nos Christologies Successives," von Hugel says that Blondel "either cannot or will not distinguish sufficiently between historical events and their spiritual significance."<sup>3</sup> Blondel seems here to look on history as a natural science whose significance is grasped in the observed data itself. On the other hand, von Hugel asserts that historical facts in themselves, "without the interpretation which we apply to the data with the aid of grace, have no reality, no spiritual significance."<sup>4</sup> Thus, though he refuses to limit critical investigation of the historical evidence itself, he sees the significance of these historical events explained in the experience of Christians at present, which is expressed in dogma. Thus it is not necessary to separate the Jesus of history from the Lord of faith. Such a view was more analytic than genetic in its approach: "the soul of Christianity demands not only

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1. cf. esp. A.L.Lilley, Modernism, A Record and Review (New York 1908) pp. 112-20

2. A.R. Vidler, Modernist Movement, p. 208

3. La Quinzaine, 1904, vol., lviii, p. 293, quoted in Nedoncelle, von Hugel, p. 185

4. Ibid., p. 305

that it should have body now, but it also demands that it should have had body from the beginning."<sup>5</sup> There is never in dogma and history an exact correspondence, and "to look for such a thing is as ridiculous as to expect to find a miniature oak inside an acorn." We must always expect that dogma will change so that it can adequately express the whole Christian present experience of the risen Christ revealed in history, in terms of a given era. As such there is at present in dogma some imagery which is unnecessary, especially in connection with the dogmas of the Virgin Birth<sup>6</sup> and Resurrection, both of which express great truths of faith. While the expression of the experience in dogma changes, the experience is of the same Christ.

#### d. The Church

Von Hugel felt that historical criticism had destroyed the idea that the organized Church, in all but rudimentary form, was created as such by Jesus. For example, Jesus lived and died a member of the Jewish Church and seems never to have conceived of anything more than a humble brotherhood. The present ecclesiastical organization

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5. From Rinnovamento, vol. 3, p. 218. Quoted in Bedoyere, von Hugel, p. 189

6. Not taking sides on the question of the Virgin Birth, von Hugel nonetheless points out that the Virgin Birth does not necessarily mean divinity, or contrarily, that the disproof of the Virgin Birth does not involve disproof of the divinity of Jesus: "Our Lord might have been conceived and born miraculously and yet still be merely man; our Lord might be all that the doctrine of His divinity strives to express and yet be conceived and born, with regard to the merely physical details of the facts, in the same manner as any other entirely human man." (from Rinnovamento, quoted by W.S.Palmer, Christianity and Christ, London 1920, p. 33)

could go back to Jesus only "germinally and not formally and materially."<sup>7</sup> Yet despite his disagreement with the official Roman position, he was certain that the proper dogmatic development of Christianity could take place only within the established Catholic Church. The Church drew up and preserved the documents dealing with the Christian historical revelation, and maintained the proper context in which the significance of those documents could be found. Taking a risk, the Church summarizes in language the collective experience of the past, the life's labor of countless souls, of incalculable benefit to individuals in the present, enabling them to grow with the aid of others.

The Church also fulfills a conservative function. Its official theology is "ever repetitive of something past and gone; it is the voice of the average thoughts of the many; aims at limiting the action of its subjects to a passive reception and more or less mechanical execution of its demands; is essentially timid;"<sup>8</sup> it is even artificial in its division into right and wrong, light and dark. This conservative function will ever be unpopular and highly irritating to individual experience which may soar above it in vividness. And yet it is a useful balance to the individual soul: "The majority, the average...have certain rights.... And safety, even of the simply material and easily weakening and protective kind, has a certain right and claim."<sup>9</sup>

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7. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Series Two, pp. 18-19

8. Ibid., pp. 10-12

9. Idem. Cf. also Essays and Addresses, Series One, pp. 264-65; 276-77. R.S. Emrich has brought this out richly in The Conception of the Church in the Writings of...von Hugel, Munich 1939



History bears witness, von Hugel believes, that the institutional is an essential element in religion. Religious authority, the question of its rightness or wrongness aside, has persisted from the beginning, and furthermore countless millions since the beginning have attested to the benefit which derives from it.

This is not to say that the Church is infallible in every dogmatic pronouncement or institutional aspect. "The Church, i.e. ecclesiastical officials, has the right to many, even great sacrifices on our part, but not simply to everything or anything."<sup>10</sup> Von Hugel, it must be remembered, kept the mystical, individual, intuitive, and the rational, and the institutional aspect in careful balance. The institution must never crush the mystical individual experience, however, any more than it should crush the God-given rational faculties of man. But the institutional aspect of religion exists so that these intuitive and rational perceptions may be broadened, strengthened, and corrected by their coming together with the views of others having the same experience.<sup>1</sup> Von Hugel's aim was to promote the better expression within the Church of its experience of the living Christ.

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10. Bernard, ed., Selected Letters, p. 136 (letter of von Hugel to Tyrrell, Dec. 18, 1906)

1. von Hugel, Essays and Addresses, Second Series, p. 23

## CHAPTER TWO: THE MODERN CHURCHMEN

### 1. THE GENERAL POSITION OF THE MODERN CHURCHMEN

The object of this chapter is not to discuss once again the various controversies such as the Kikuyu Conference of 1913, the measures taken against Hensley Henson or J. M. Thompson, or the battles over Prayer Book reform and ritual. These have been discussed by many scholars.

We shall be concerned with studying the tendency of several theologians associated, directly or indirectly, with The Modern Churchmen's Union towards positions similar to those of the Modernists described in the first chapter. Before looking at the tendencies of these individuals, we must first note the background out of which they came as well as the tenets of the vast majority of the Modern Churchmen with whom they were associated, tenets which were largely at variance with Catholic Modernism. The Churchmen's Union was founded in 1898 and was the organizational witness of latter-day Broad Churchmen. The new burst of life which came to this group in the twentieth century may be attributed mainly to foreign theological writings: the pragmatism of James, the revival of mystical studies, and the Roman Modernists. By far the strongest influence on this group, however, was the Liberal Protestant theology of which Harnack is the great representative. It has been said that Oxford is the final resting place of German ideas when they have died in their native land. The Modern Churchmen's Union may be said to be the final resting place of Liberal Protestantism in high theological circles, though it embalmed

the corpse in its own particular way.

The Modern Churchmen's Union may be said, then, to combine German Liberal Protestantism with an inherited Broad Church theology. Though time does not permit a substantiation of this point by detailed documentation from individual Broad Churchmen, the General position of the Modern Churchmen is quite adequately represented by the papers delivered at the Girton Conference of 1921 and by the definitive work of H. D. A. Major.<sup>1</sup>

Major is indeed the archetypal Modern Churchman: he was principal of Ripon Hall (the seed bed of the Union) and founder and editor of the Union's influential publication The Modern Churchman. Major was most influenced by English Broad Churchmanship. His idea of the Church was that of a comprehensive national society along the lines of Stanley, with a creed sufficiently broad to encompass all shades of Christianity. The Athanasian Creed, for example, was rejected because it repelled large numbers. A questionnaire which he organized among Union members showed that many preferred that each Christian should derive his own creed from study of the New Testament, and that at best a simple creed was desirable for the community of Christians. Major held the Broad Church view of Arnold and Coleridge on the use of the Bible by the individual: "The test of the moral and spiritual value of the Bible is the test of experience - the test which Samuel Taylor Coleridge as the first to put forward as proof of its inspiration: 'Whatever finds me bears witness for

1. English Modernism. (Cambridge, Mass. 1927)

itself that it has proceeded from the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Revelation was likewise to the interior individual soul. The prophets heard no exterior voice: "they were victims of psychological illusion that analysis discerns and dissipates. The old theologian was right who said 'there is no faith save in the heart where God has made himself heard; there are no divine words except those which faith hears in the inmost sanctuary of the soul.'"<sup>3</sup> Major favored a revised Nicene Creed beginning "We believe" and excising the Virgin Birth and filioque. "The use of the Creed. . . should be regarded not so much as an expression of individual belief as an act of devotion proclaiming the historic faith of the universal Church of Christ."<sup>4</sup> For years it was the particular delight of the Modern Churchmen to write creeds of their own and many of these were published in The Modern Churchman.

Like the Broad Churchmen, the Modern Churchman's approach was highly rational, and like them, he had little interest in liturgics or the devotional life (which were the prevailing concern of the Anglo-Catholics). The rational approach is well-illustrated in their handling of miracles. Leaving aside the question whether miracles can happen, most Modern Churchmen believed that they do not.<sup>5</sup> The New Testament miracles are

2. Ibid., p. 118, quoting Coleridge's Confessions, Letter One.

3. Ibid., p. 119.

4. Ibid., p. 182.

5. Ibid., p. 131: J. S. Bezzant comments on Tennant's statement that "of laws which never shall be broken we know nothing." "But of laws which never are broken we know a great deal."



rejected on rational grounds: as Wendland points out,<sup>6</sup> God acts through nature and unnatural miracles such as walking on water do not therefore occur. As for connecting the Virgin Birth to the doctrine of the Incarnation, Major comments "to the Modernist [i. e. Modern Churchman's] mind the miracles attached to doctrines seem to create a difficulty in accepting them, not to constitute a reason for accepting them."<sup>7</sup> And even if miracles in the traditional sense could be said to occur, they could prove no doctrine beyond themselves: "When Matthew Arnold wrote sarcastically, 'to prove to you that what I am writing is true, I propose to turn my pen into a penwiper,' he was not writing blasphemous nonsense but justifiable criticism of a view of miracles which is now discredited."<sup>8</sup>

In line with this confident rationalism went the inherited Victorian belief in progress which in all European countries except Britain<sup>9</sup> was destroyed in World War One. Especially outrageous to this party was the "sinister legacy of Augustine. . . , the horrid nightmare that has oppressed"<sup>10</sup> Christianity. The Modern Churchman refused any doctrine remotely approaching

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6. Johannes Wendland, Miracles and Christianity, (New York, 1911).

7. Major, English Modernism, p. 127.

8. Ibid., p. 132.

9. This is a little recognized fact, and it was pointed out to me at length by Alec Vidler.

10. C. H. Perez, Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 9, (Dec. 1911), p. 498 ff.



total depravity. "Original sin" was admitted as a description of our condition only with consummate reluctance<sup>11</sup> and in nothing like its traditional sense. Children were not conceived in sin, and Baptism was not washing away of sin of any sort: "Let it suffice to say that children are baptised because they are potential children of God, and because Baptism admits them to the Christian Church, the human family of God, where they can be treated as His children."<sup>1</sup>

Writing in 1927, Major had by then witnessed the abandonment by many in Europe of the Liberal Protestant kernel-husk idea of Christianity, and so he tried to maintain that Modern Churchmen somehow combined this kernel-husk idea with the Catholic Modernist acorn-oak theory. Modern Churchmen in general, however, had as their goal the Liberal Protestant ideal of separating Jesus the teacher and exemplar from the accretions of dogma which have obscured the original figure. C. W. Emmet's statement - "We are not now asking what we believe about Jesus on the basis of experience and Christian theology, but what we have a right to affirm as historians,"<sup>2</sup> - represents the approach of the vast majority of the speakers at the Modern Churchmen's Conference at Gorton in 1921.<sup>3</sup> There was no beginning with the present experience of the living Christ as was

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11. Major, English Modernism, p. 110 f.

1. Ibid., p. 112.

2. C. W. Emmet, "What do we know of Jesus?", Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September 1921, p. 213.

3. Cf. also Leighton Parks, What is Modernism, p. 13 ff.

the case with the Catholic Modernists. The object of the Modern Churchmen was to go to the records and to attempt "to sift original fact from tradition."<sup>4</sup> Though Emmet criticized the Liberal Protestant approach for occasionally emphasizing too strongly the teaching of Jesus while forgetting his personality, "if it avoids this danger its way of approach is not far from the truth."<sup>5</sup> The approach was thus quite the same as the Liberal Protestants, but, in true English fashion, a more moderate result was obtained: the Modern Churchmen found not merely a great and good teacher but a great personality. But it was a non-eschatological, non-miraculous<sup>6</sup> personality that was discovered. "Jesus was not portrayed as unique because he was born of a Virgin or claimed to be divine; these things were ascribed to him, whether rightly or wrongly, because in his actual life he was

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4. Emmet, Ibid., p. 214.

5. Ibid., p. 215.

6. Major, in his preface to the volume reprinting the speeches at the Girton Conference (Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September, 1921, pp. 193 ff.), says that the Modern Churchmen may have stripped Jesus of his miraculous character, but that Lake illegitimately strips him of his moral and spiritual supremacy as well. Most Modern Churchmen rejected Lake's view. Foakes-Jackson called Modernism "Jesuanity" in the Hibbert Journal, vol. 20, no. 78, January, 1922, p. 193 f. in contempt. Major comments (English Modernism, p. 140) "The practical elimination of the personality of Jesus from Christianity, or the reduction of that personality to insignificant dimensions is unsound criticism. . . ." In Major's Girton Conference preface, p. 196, he remarks: "God reveals himself to men not through the abnormal, but through the normal. With the eye of faith God is seen, not through 'the chinks in the universe' but in the universe as a whole, and supremely in human personality. . . . Not by thunder, fire, and storm is he revealed to us, but by the still small voice of the awakening consciousness of man."

obviously unique."<sup>7</sup> The heart of this unique personality, however, remained his teaching and his exemplary life. Jesus taught a new concept of what God was like and then lived it and therein lay his uniqueness. Jesus is significant for us today primarily because of what he taught (past-tense) and the way he practiced (past-tense) what he taught.

It was the object of the much-publicized Gorton Conference not to deny the divinity of Christ, but rather to affirm his humanity, and to see his "divinity" in his perfect humanity.<sup>8</sup> Such a view was based philosophically on the denial of an absolute difference between divinity and humanity (a view theologically justified by Genesis' statement that man is created in the image of God). Major insists that the human Jesus is therefore of one substance with the Father,<sup>9</sup> and any doctrine of the union of two separate and different natures in Christ (i. e. human and divine) is the creation of a "psychological monstrosity."<sup>10</sup> As Rashdall said, "if 'divine' and 'human' are thought of as mutually exclusive terms, ... if ~~that~~ is thought of merely as a machine or an animal having no community ~~of~~ nature with the

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7. C. W. Emmet, "What do we know of Jesus?", Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September, 1921, p. 220. Cf. Nowell Smith, "The Centrality of the Person and Work of Jesus," same issue, p. 267: "I assent to the proposition that Jesus is God, yet God in that proposition is for me an adjective."

8. Major, preface to same issue, p. 196.

9. Major, English Modernism, p. 147-48.

10. Ibid., p. 158.

universal Spirit. . . then indeed it would be absurd to maintain that one human being, and one only, was both God and man at the same time. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Only some such conviction of the close connexion of humanity with divinity makes a doctrine of the Incarnation possible.

Such a view results in an optimistic view of humanity. Man's weakness does not lie in his nature, but in the weakness of his effort to live as a son of God.<sup>2</sup> The Word is indeed eternally generated, but "this eternal generation of the Word ought not, however, to be limited to the Person of Christ. . . , but should be extended to the whole world of finite intelligences."<sup>3</sup> In Jesus we see the perfect indwelling of divinity in humanity, and this indwelling "differs in degree, but not in kind, from the divine indwelling in sons of men who are potentially sons of God."<sup>4</sup> And

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1. Hastings Rashdall, Jesus Human and Divine (London, 1922), p. 17; cf. Major, "Jesus the Son of God," in Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September, 1921, p. 277.
  2. Cf. esp. Major's preface, p. 198, same issue of Modern Churchman, which very closely approaches Pelagianism. Cf. also E. W. Barnes, "The Centrality of the Person and Work of Jesus," same issue of Modern Churchman, p. 261: "The present degradation of human life is due to man's refusal to accept Christ's estimate of its values and duties."
  3. Major, English Modernism, p. 159; Cf. R. B. Tollinton, "Jesus as the Revealer of God," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, p. 237: The revelation of God in Jesus is fundamentally akin to, and in the same series with, the other phases of the self-expression of the Divine."
  4. Ibid., p. 160; Major clarifies that this is not pantheism, p. 103: "The danger now is lest belief in the divine Immanence should drive out belief in Divine transcendence. . . . Although the Modernist believes in God as working in and through the creative process, he also believes in him as existing both before, and independently of, the created universe. God is in all things, but not equally, and all things, but not equally, are in God." Cf. Rashdall, Jesus Human and Divine, p. 19.



Tollinton even went so far as to say that Jesus' revelation of God was not absolute and final.<sup>5</sup> Our divine sonship is ideal and potential, but not yet actual, of course. "But Jesus renders possible the attainment of the ideal of Divine Sonship by every man."<sup>6</sup>

Christ is unique, then, not for a miraculous birth or because strange events accompanied his life, but on account of the spiritual majesty of his realization of perfect humanity - in his personality and teaching - which is, in its perfection, "deity."<sup>7</sup> And the permanent value of Jesus is, as M. G. Glazebrook said, the moral perfection he preached and practiced, "the moral standards, the spiritual experiences, the sense of Divine presence, and the hope of a blessed future, which have inspired countless thousands of his followers."<sup>8</sup> The life and death of Jesus have no metaphysical function; his death is a courageous martyrdom which is sequel to and completion of his life. At the heart of Christianity for the Modern Churchmen is the historical man Jesus, and Barnes summarizes in a phrase their position: "Thus we conclude that Jesus was central as an example to mankind."<sup>9</sup> And this example of moral purpose and religious insight will

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5. Tollinton, "Jesus as the Revealer of God," Modern Churchman. vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, p. 243.

6. Major, preface to same issue Modern Churchman, p. 196.

7. Though few went so far as to say "the Deity" - i.e. that God equals perfect man. Cf. Bethune-Baker's clarification below.

8. Glazebrook, "Christ and the Creeds," Modern Churchman. vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September, 1921, p. 202.

9. Barnes, "The Centrality of the Person and Work of Jesus," Modern Churchman. vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, September, 1921, p. 256.



inspire man to greater heights: "As man develops in the way predestined by God, he will continuously approach the standard set by Jesus."<sup>10</sup>

The real flowering of Modern-Churchman doctrine, as described above, was at the Girton Conference of 1921, only a decade after the foundation of the Modern Churchman. Since that time the movement has ceased to be either very significant or genuinely "modern." Though in membership the Union continues quantitatively healthy today, its inconsequence and qualitative deficiency is illustrated by the Modern Churchman, which is a pale copy of the once vital journal that Major edited.

Gradually British theology came to realize the impact that the First World War had had upon continental Liberal Protestantism, and at the same time Victorian Broad Churchmanship became less and less palatable to a changing and disillusioned England. Major's Noble Lectures of 1927 reflect this fact. In the first issue of the Modern Churchman in 1911 Major had spoken, in good Broad Church fashion, of the desire for "a great national Church which could unite and build up all classes of the nation, by inculcating an ideal of life at once reasonable and religious."<sup>1</sup> In the same volume he could speak of "the religion of Christ as the best mortar with which a state can be built today."<sup>2</sup> By 1927 Major admitted difficulties in the Broad Church tradition, deploring its Erastianism,

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10. Ibid... pp. 255-56.

1. Major, "Ourselves and Our Aim," Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 1, April, 1911, p. 11.

2. Major, "Signs of the Times," Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 4, July, 1911, p. 177.

among other things, though he still desired the alliance of Church and state and even episcopal nominations by the Crown. He also came to feel that the academically-inclined Broad Churchmen had too closely identified Christianity with rationalistic humanitarian utilitarianism which had good conduct as its end. In a similar way, though they saw no particular value in "combining devotion with art,"<sup>3</sup> Modern Churchmen came more and more to realize the importance of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Major reluctantly admitted the influence of Roman Modernism on the Modern Churchmen: "I am disposed to think that [Roman Modernism] accounts in some measure - not by any means altogether - for the difference between Broad and Liberal Churchmen [i. e. of the Victorian Age] and English Modernists [i. e. Modern Churchmen]."<sup>5</sup> This influence came mainly through

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3. Major, English Modernism, p. 33.
  4. Cf. F. C. Burkitt, The Failure of Liberal Christianity, (London, 1910).
  5. Major, English Modernism, p. 24. He nevertheless strongly attacks the Modernists, p. 21: "The Roman Catholic Modernist position was fundamentally unsound. It seemed, even to those who sympathized with its aims, to support a pantheistic theology, a pragmatist philosophy, a polytheistic worship, in the name of scientific research, historical criticism, and Jesus Christ." Broad Churchmen, it should be said, had, of course, some affinities with Roman Catholic Modernism at the start. Both were critical in their own way, and both had distinguished between religious truth and its inadequate expression in dogma. (Cf. esp. Modern Churchman, vol. 2, no. 7, p. 332 f. on R. D. Hampden and Major, English Modernism, pp. 98-99.).

the Anglo-Catholic school, which in Lux Mundi had already arrived at certain conclusions sympathetic to later Roman Modernism, and which was in turn greatly influenced in some quarters by the Roman Modernists. This influence accounts for the growing acceptance by certain members of the Modern Churchmen's Union of an idea of development of doctrine within the historic community and the activity of the Holy Spirit presently experienced there. Christianity must be judged by its development and activity in history as well as its origin; a kernel-husk theory alone was not sufficient. Major said in 1927 that the Modern Churchmen tried to combine the positive elements of both the kernel-husk theory and the acorn-oak idea of the Modernists.<sup>6</sup>

The vast majority of Modern Churchmen in the twenties, thirties, and forties remained committed to a position close to that expressed in the Girton Conference papers of 1921. And that the movement ceased to be "modern" or progressive is well illustrated by Barnes' Rise of Christianity (1947), for example.<sup>7</sup> Four individuals associated with the Modern Churchman's Union, however, show varying tendencies towards Modernist positions. Perhaps Norman Pittenger has these men in mind when he writes:

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6. Major, English Modernism, p. 31.

7. Cf. C. H. Dodd's review in the London and Holborn Quarterly Review, April, 1947. Interestingly, also, in the collection Anglican Liberalism, 1908, ten of twelve essayists were political as well as religious liberals. Almost none of the Modern Churchmen were political liberals, however, but in fact militantly conservative.

The word "modernism" has for many today a bad connotation; they feel that it describes an attempt to commend Christianity to our age by reducing it to a vague ethical theism in which Jesus Christ occupies the role only of a great prophet and teacher. However accurate this may be as a description of American, British, and German "liberal Protestantism," it is not true of the majority /highly over-optimistic/ of British and American theologians, who in one way or another have been associated with the "Modernist" movement. These men were, and are, so deeply immersed in the institutional and sacramental life of the Church that any vague ethical theism is utterly alien to their spirit.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. HASTINGS RASHDALL

Of the four major theologians discussed below, the least influenced by Modernism was Hastings Rashdall (1858-1924), Oxford don and later Dean of Carlisle, regarded by friend and foe as one of the great scholars of the day. Because of his paper at the Girton Conference, and for his other written theological and philosophical views, he was harshly criticized for his unorthodoxy. Such criticism hurt him bitterly and, for example when Inge, whom he considered more unorthodox than himself, was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, Rashdall remarked: "Why not? Inge is a Buddhist!"<sup>9</sup>

Rashdall's approach was basically that of the Liberal Protestants. The historic, dead (if I may be permitted so blunt a statement) Jesus of Nazareth, the teacher and exemplar, was the core of Christianity.<sup>10</sup> And

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8. W. N. Pittenger, "Christian Apologetic of Bethune-Baker," Anglican Theological Review, vol. xxxvii, no. 4, October, 1955, pp. 260 ff.

9. R. M. Helm, The Gloomy Dean, (Winston-Salem, 1962), p. 32.

10. Though Rashdall, at least in theory, wanted to make more of the Church and the idea of the Holy Spirit still at work than was perhaps characteristic of the Liberal Protestants. Cf. esp. Ideas and Ideals (selected by H. D. A. Major and F. L. Cross), (Oxford, 1928), pp. 107-08, and Jesus, Human and Divine, p. 57.



"you will find Harnack. . .both in regard to matters of pure criticism and in point of spiritual insight, [a] better [guide] than Loisy as to what Jesus actually taught and did and was - and as to what he ought to be to us now."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Rashdall felt that a religion without metaphysics was ridiculous and that any great event must be considered philosophically. But "I have pointed out what I believe to be the defects of the position, 'Christianity is simply Christ and the very words he uttered.' And yet from the practical point of view Harnack is not far wrong."<sup>2</sup> This approach contrasts distinctly with the Roman Modernists who began with the present experience of the living risen Christ at work in the world, and it probably prompted von Hugel to remark about "Rashdall's anti-mystical, hardly religious, religion."<sup>3</sup>

Rashdall had a profound distrust of religious experience and the attempt to rest belief in God on it. According to C. C. J. Webb "he professed himself to be entirely a stranger to any 'experience' which could be fairly described as an 'immediate' consciousness of the Divine Being."<sup>4</sup> The discoveries of mystics were often self-contradictory, and a subjective

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1. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts (eds. Major and Cross), (Oxford, 1927), p. 232.
  2. Ibid., p. 234.
  3. von Hugel, Selected Letters, ed. Holland, p. 182. (Letter to Clement Webb, Oct. 3, 1910). Though cf. Ibid., p. 367-68 (Letter to Webb, Feb. 15, 1924) for an appreciation of Rashdall's "ethical greatness" in spite of a "strangely great lack of the specifically religious sense."
  4. P. E. Matheson, Life of Hastings Rashdall, p. 243, from a chapter by C. C. J. Webb.



experience could not prove the existence of its alleged object to others.<sup>5</sup> Even the existence of God Rashdall found quite possible to doubt and "when doubts arise in my mind, I have to meet them by arguments or rational considerations of one kind or another."<sup>6</sup>

To the human Jesus of history, then, went Rashdall in his paper at the Girton Conference, which was so sensationally treated by the press. Studying the documents critically, and regarding the Fourth Gospel as unhistorical, Rashdall asserted that Jesus probably did not claim divinity and that there was nothing in his conscious relation to God that was other than that of a man to God.<sup>7</sup> He was in all respects fully a man. His human soul did not pre-exist.<sup>8</sup> Though the Word of God which at the birth of Jesus was united with his human soul did pre-exist, the same Word was incarnate in less degree in all men before and after Jesus. Nor was the mind of Jesus omniscient: "a mind which knew all the facts of history, all the science that is now known to all the men of science put together, and all the science that is as yet undiscovered, and knew it all when he was an infant in arms, would not be a human mind at all."<sup>9</sup> Jesus

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5. Cf. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts, pp. 176-77, and Ideas and Ideals, pp. 7-20.

6. Rashdall, Ideas and Ideals, p. 10.

7. Rashdall, "Christ as Logos and Son of God," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 278.

8. Cf. Rashdall, "Some Plain Words to Bishop Gore," in Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 9 and 10, (December, 1921-January, 1922), pp. 478-79 for a very important discussion in the light of criticism by Gore, of "pre-existence" and "person."

9. Rashdall, Jesus Human and Divine, pp. 34-35. Cf. God and Man, pp. 95 ff. for his criticism of Gore's kenotic theory, however.

also thought in Jewish categories, and though Rashdall rejected Schweitzer's highly eschatological view of Jesus<sup>10</sup> and felt that genuine eschatological sayings were few, he still felt it "difficult to deny that our Lord entertained expectations about the future which history has not verified."<sup>1</sup> Nor were the alleged miracles proof of a unique divinity any more than the alleged miracles of Moses and Elijah made them divine.<sup>2</sup>

With this view went the Idealist philosophy of his teacher T. H. Green, viz. that human minds are reproductions "in limited modes" of the Divine Mind. God is incarnate, in varying degrees, therefore, in all human souls, and is progressively<sup>3</sup> revealed in lives of high moral consciousness. In the single human life of Jesus, God is more fully revealed than in any other human life and "God can only be understood as he has revealed himself in humanity at its highest in Christ."<sup>4</sup> Rashdall is aware of the pantheistic

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10. Cf. Rashdall's review of Tyrrell's Autobiography and Life, in Modern Churchman, vol. 2, no. 11, (February, 1913), p. 510: "I do not believe that the type of mind revealed by Christianity at the Cross Roads can have any great future. I cannot believe that any considerable body of men will believe that Jesus uttered all the sayings attributed to him, that they represent a simple delusion, and yet that this delusion must ever be the essence of Christianity. . . , that they will regard all the ethical teaching of Christ with something very like contempt as a mere 'interims-ethik,' . . . and yet continue to be passionately Christian."
  1. Rashdall, "Christ as Logos and Son of God," in Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 281.
  2. Cf. Rashdall reviewing J. M. Thompson's Miracles in the New Testament in Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 6, (September, 1911), p. 373 f. If Mark and John felt the divinity of Christ rose or fell on the Virgin Birth would they have omitted it? Though, p. 380 ff., Rashdall hedges on denying the miraculous. Cf. also Rashdall on Resurrection in Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 12, (March, 1912), p. 704 f.
  3. Cf. "Progress" in Ideas and Ideals, in which he opines that Inge overstates the case against progress.
  4. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts, p. 47.

danger of such a doctrine. God reveals himself in and through human lives in nature: he is not equated with those lives. Also rejected is the doctrine that God becomes incarnate equally in all human beings, the worst as well as the best.<sup>5</sup> And Rashdall points out that the characteristic view of the Fatherhood of God, central to both Liberal Protestants and Modern Churchmen, "obviously implies a conception of the personality of God which is the antipodes of Pantheism."<sup>6</sup>

What Christ taught and the life he lived are therefore the ideals for Christians. And "the idea of the brotherhood of man is the central idea of Christ's teaching."<sup>7</sup> The really important thing is not what we believe about Christ, but that we follow his example. Rashdall rejected more cosmological theories of the Atonement, for instance, in favor of a revived Abelardian exemplarist view. Rashdall felt that Jesus never taught that his death was an atonement for human sin, but contrarily that God forgives the sin of an individual if he truly repents. Any idea that Christ bore the punishment for our sins instead of us, or that Justice required such a sacrifice, was rejected. "Abelard and his followers really return to the more primitive and ethical teaching of the earliest fathers. Christ's death is the strongest exemplary influence in the world

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5. Rashdall, "Christ as Logos and Son of God," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 281.
  6. Rashdall, "Some Plain Words to Bishop Gore," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 9 and 10, (December, 1921-January, 1922), p. 472.
  7. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts, p. 251.

for bringing about repentance and amendment in men, which are the fathers' necessary conditions for our forgiveness."<sup>8</sup> Our estimate of Christ metaphysically is unimportant by comparison to the practical test of the degree to which we follow his example in our lives.<sup>9</sup> And far from leaving explicit statutes either for individuals or states, Jesus left only general principles and ideas to be accepted by the individual conscience.<sup>10</sup> So Jesus will be understood and interpreted by men differently in each age.

Rashdall, in bringing out the humanity of Jesus, never asserted that Jesus was human and not divine. Because Christ did not claim divinity does not mean that we should not attribute divinity to him. He may be so called because in him is the fullest realization in man of man's potential, of man's deity. Every human soul reveals God in varying degrees, just as every human is a son of God, but the human Christ so fully reveals God, provides us with so saving an example, that we can call him divine. "In Jesus Christ humanity attained its highest moral development, and, just

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8. Rashdall, Ideas and Ideals, pp. 162 ff. Cf. his famous The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology. (London, 1919), The Bampton Lectures of 1915.

9. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts, p. 99. Cf. Matheson, Rashdall, the chapter by C. C. J. Webb, p. 242: "He preferred to define his position as an 'ideal utilitarianism,' agreeing with the older utilitarianism in finding the ultimate criterion of right action in its conduciveness to a "good" which could be realized in a personal consciousness."

10. Rashdall, Principles and Precepts, pp. 8-11.



because of that perfect humanity, the conscience of mankind has recognized in him a supreme, a unique, in a sense a final revelation of that God who all through the world's history had been by slow, successive stages revealing himself to the human spirit."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. WILLIAM RALPH INGE

William Ralph Inge (1860-1954), Cambridge don and later Dean of St. Paul's (1911-34), though president, in succession to Rashdall, of the Modern Churchman's Union (1924-34),<sup>2</sup> is classed by Macquarrie with von Hugel and Heiler as "thinkers of such originality and such a wide range of interests that it is impossible to classify them with any precision."<sup>3</sup> His great achievement was the Gifford Lectures of 1918

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1. Rashdall, Doctrine and Development, p. 80. Cf. also Jesus Human and Divine, p. 43-44: "We can form no higher conception of God than we see exhibited in humanity at its highest; and in Christ, as in no other man before or since. . . ." Cf. P. J. Kirkby on Rashdall, Modern Churchman, vol. xvii, nos. 6, 7, 8, (October, 1927).
  2. Cf. Helm, The Gloomy Dean, p. 249 ff. Inge very nearly resigned twice from the Council after he retired as president. In 1940, for example, he said: "Some of the younger members have really no interest in Liberal theology, and wish to commit the society to a kind of sloppy socialism, totally alien to the objects for which it was founded. . . ." But he remained loyal.
  3. J. Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought. (New York, 1963), p. 148. Cf. the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflexions (London, 1928), from his diary of November 10, 1925: "We have had lunch with the Dean of St. Paul's and his wife. He is a strange, isolated figure, with all the culture in the world, and a curiously developed gift of expression, but with kinks and twists both intellectual and temperamental. Still, he is one of the few ecclesiastics who is really interesting."



published in two volumes as The Philosophy of Plotinus, where he found in the Platonism of the pagan Plotinus the approach to reality which he thought to be most distinctively Christian.<sup>4</sup> He was one of the greatest scholars of mysticism that England has produced. But his fame was the result mainly of his newspaper articles, lectures, and books commenting upon the spirits of the age, which earned him the epithet "gloomy Dean."

His sermon, "Liberal Catholicism," preached in 1904,<sup>5</sup> perhaps the bitterest and unfairest of many attacks on Loisy, signalled the beginning of a feud with and vendetta against the Roman Modernists which Inge only softened in old age.<sup>6</sup> His writings on Modernism show Inge at his worst, and the brilliant mind with an even more brilliant pen could be devastating. His numerous attacks are all variations on one theme: the Modernists have separated dogma from fact, the Christ of faith from the Jesus of history. This could be cleverly and effectively stated in a number of ways: "It

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4. Cf. Helm, Gloomy Dean, p. 159 f. on Inge's Platonism in combination with his Christianity.

5. Found in Inge, Faith and Knowledge, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh, 1905).

6. Cf. Helm, Gloomy Dean, p. 22. He came to agree that too much stress had been laid on what happened 2000 years ago, and that the significant thing is "what Christ means for us today." His writings on Roman Modernism may be found principally in the following: Faith and Knowledge (2nd ed., 1905), pp. 281-92; Outspoken Essays, Series One, pp. 108 ff., 137-71; Series Two, pp. 51-53. Modern Churchman, (September, 1925), p. 276 ff. Hibbert Journal, no. viii, p. 435.

has long been the crux of Catholic apologetics to reconcile the theoretical immobility of dogma with actual facts. The older method was to rewrite history. . . ." <sup>7</sup> Likewise, "it is plain that we have here a one-sided emphasis on the dynamic aspect of reality" <sup>8</sup> which regards Christ as a force rather than as a fact. "It is as if one were to trace one's descent from some great man, and to establish every link but the first. . . . It does not matter whether the Incarnation was fact or legend" <sup>9</sup> to the Modernists. Faith can create dogmas as Socrates created myths. Tyrrell's main object is despicable: "to strike at the heart of Protestantism by stripping the historic Christ of those attributes for which in the Reformed Churches he is honoured and adored. . . ; [his picture] is radically untrue." <sup>10</sup> It is unlikely, finally, "that the plain Englishman will ever allow that an ostensibly historical proposition may be false as a matter of fact, but true for faith." <sup>1</sup> One may agree with these outbursts, but at the same time the scholar will fail to see much connexion between what Inge is attacking as Modernism and what Modernism actually was.

Inge is a rather typical Modern Churchman in that he combines the

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7. Inge, Outspoken Essays, Series One, (London, 1921), p. 143.
  8. Ibid., p. 155.
  9. Inge, Faith and Knowledge, p. 174.
  10. Inge, reviewing Tyrrell's Christianity at the Cross Roads, Hibbert Journal, viii, (1910), p. 435.
  1. Inge, Outspoken Essays, I, p. 113.

old Broad Church tradition (academic, rational, comprehensive)<sup>2</sup> and the Liberal Protestant approach that sought the essence of Christianity in the historical Jesus separated from the accretions of dogma and institution. With this went a general disinterest in music and liturgy<sup>3</sup> and a dislike of institutionalism, especially of the ecclesiastical sort.<sup>4</sup> (The Church's record was "very largely a history of decline and perversion.")<sup>5</sup>

His approach to the historical Jesus was not that of the traditionalists. He felt that the controversy over Christ's divinity had been conducted on the wrong lines since men began with thinking they knew what the attributes of God were, and then investigated Jesus to show that he had those attributes and was therefore divine. "But surely Christ came to earth to reveal to us not that he was like God, but that God was like himself."<sup>6</sup> Divinity may

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2. Ibid., p. 108.

3. J. S. Bezzant tells of a reply Inge once made to a questioner who asked "Mr. Dean, as head of the great metropolitical Cathedral of the British Empire, don't you take any interest in its great festivals and services?" Inge replied, "No; neither do I collect postage stamps."

4. Inge, Science, Religion, and Reality, p. 387 f. The religion of Christ must be considered apart from its institutional aspects. "It is even possible to speculate. . . whether the religion of Christ might not be a greater power in the world if its professional custodians were removed."

5. Inge, Christian Ethics and Modern Problems, p. 19.

6. Inge, Outspoken Essays, Series Two, (London, 1922), p. 49. Contrary to Rashdall, Inge felt (Contentio Veritatis, p. 99) that Jesus either claimed to be Son of God uniquely, or else the Gospels were too untrustworthy to be believed at all.

be attributed to Jesus when we look at him and recognize him as the fullest revelation of God there could possibly be under human conditions. But this recognition is an act of faith which springs from historical facts as interpreted by the individual, and the dogma of Christ's divinity cannot be proved by any external evidence.<sup>7</sup> Nor is it attestable by being surrounded by miraculous events, such as the Virgin Birth,<sup>8</sup> for "to make our belief in Christ as a living. . . spirit depend on any abnormal occurrences in the physical world, seems to me an undetected residue of materialism."<sup>9</sup>

Inge's treatment of the Gospels was not as liberal as the Liberal Protestants or the Catholic Modernists. He felt, for example, that if Jesus did not claim to be Son of God in a unique way, then the Gospels were too unworthy to have any historical value.<sup>10</sup> He insisted that, unless Christ was sinless, he was, like ourselves, an unrealized attempt at the

7. Inge, in Contentio Veritatis (London, 1922), pp. 102-03: Though the example of Christ remains a precious treasure even without the belief, and even as an unrealized ideal.
8. Inge, Outspoken Essays, I, p. 121 f. It is a tradition probably not as old as the Church, which must, in the nature of the case, rest "on the unsupported assertion of Mary. . . , for Joseph could only testify that the child was not his." Catholic tradition can add nothing to Mary's assertion, if made.
9. Inge, Outspoken Essays, II, p. 50.
10. Inge, Contentio Veritatis, p. 99. Again, the difference with Rashdall should be noted.



unity of the human and the divine.<sup>1</sup> He never could bring himself to reckon fully with the problem of Jesus' sharing of popular Jewish eschatological illusions,<sup>2</sup> and he strenuously opposed Schweitzer's picture of a deluded fanatic. Unlike the Liberal Protestants he could see considerable value in the accounts of the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and Ascension.

"History as history is not the business of religion,"<sup>3</sup> and the New Testament writers are expressing symbolically, sacramentally, or visibly the truth of the invisible redemption of humanity in Christ, whose Incarnation was "a symbol or sacrament in the visible order."

How was a person supposed to arrive at such a belief about the historic Christ? Commenting on the age, in 1909, Inge wrote: "The salient fact of the religious situation of our time is that the center of gravity has shifted from authority to experience. . . ."<sup>4</sup> And Inge's great interest was the study of that mystic experience<sup>5</sup> of immediate consciousness of a relationship with God.

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1. Idem.

2. Inge, The Gate of Life. (London, 1935), p. 14.

3. Inge, Contentio Veritatis, p. 90.

4. Inge, reviewing R. M. Jones' Studies in Mystical Religion, Hibbert Journal, viii, (1909), p. 209.

5. Inge, Christian Mysticism, (5th ed.), (London, 1921), pp. 4-5: "Religious mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, more generally, as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, or of the eternal in the temporal."



In saying that "the mystic is. . .the only thorough-going empiricist,"<sup>6</sup> and in emphasizing the primacy of experience of God as the fons et origo of religion, Inge was very close to the Catholic Modernists. Like them he rejected both the Church and the Bible as final authorities in religion. It is true that he conceived this experience in a less corporate sense than the Catholic Modernists, and that his study was more of individual mystics than of the religious experience of the masses. But it was nonetheless the experience by the human consciousness of an undoubtedly real God that was "the raw material of all religion. . . ."<sup>7</sup> "We may say that religious consciousness begins as pure feeling. . . . It begins with God's self-revealing presence in our consciousness."<sup>8</sup> And while we average men only rarely have flashes of light which seem to come from some source above and beyond our own personality, "Those who have mounted higher are sure that they have been in contact with ultimate reality, and heard the voice of God himself, or the glorified and indwelling Christ. Ought we not to believe them? It is conceivable, of course, that they may be deceived; but if our highest and deepest experiences cannot be trusted, it is useless to seek for truth anywhere."<sup>9</sup>

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6. Inge, reviewing R. M. Jones' Studies in Mystical Religion. Hibbert Journal, viii, (1909), p. 209.

7. Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 4-5.

8. Inge, Studies of English Mystics. (London, 1906), p. 29-30.

9. Inge, Mysticism in Religion. (London, 1947), p. 149. Cf. Inge, Faith and Knowledge, p. 34: "Those who repudiate the testimony of the saints as to their spiritual experiences and the source of their holiness are bound to furnish some explanation of the delusion which has misled so many minds. And no explanation seems possible except that of Porcius Festus 'Paul, thou art beside thyself.' Either religious belief is a natural and normal product of the healthy human mind, - and as we have no possible appeal from the highest human consciousness, that is as much as saying it is true, - or it is mental disease, a form of insanity."

In one of the most beautiful passages in all English prose writing, Inge describes the collective results of the mystical experiences of these greats of the religious life:

Now it will be found that these men of acknowledged and pre-eminent saintliness agree very closely in what they tell us about God. They tell us that they have arrived gradually at an unshakeable conviction, not based on inference, but on immediate experience, that God is a Spirit with whom the human spirit can hold intercourse; that in him meet all that they can imagine of goodness, truth, and beauty; that they can see his footprints everywhere in nature, and feel his presence within them as the life of their life, so that in proportion as they come to themselves they come to Him. They tell us that what separates us from Him and from happiness is, first, self-seeking in all its forms; and, secondly, sensuality in all its forms; that these are the ways of darkness and death, which hide from us the face of God; while the path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As they have toiled up the narrow way, the Spirit has spoken to them of Christ, and has enlightened the eyes of their understandings, til they have at least begun to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God.<sup>10</sup>

But the mystical experience is far from being all-sufficient. Man's reasoning powers must be used to the fullest. The experience of something formless must be expressed in our thought in symbols, and symbols tend to petrify and become irrelevant and must ever change.<sup>1</sup> Inge is here making the distinction made by the Catholic Modernists between the experience

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10. Inge, Christian Mysticism, pp. 325 ff. Cf. Mysticism in Religion: The God experienced will never satisfy materialists, pragmatists, or others who want to put God in a box. The world is not necessary to God and he is not bound up in it. He is transcendent, makes no progress, does not change, and is all in all.

1. Inge, Christian Mysticism, p. 5.

itself and our expression of it in human terms. Also, the experience is of spiritual truths only, always speaks in the present tense only, and cannot possibly guarantee either an historic event, such as recorded in the Gospels, or a future event, such as an impending judgment. Mystical experience can tell us that Christ is risen and living, but not that he rose on the third day.<sup>2</sup> We have been given other faculties for investigating these things and all of them must be used by a religious person. Feeling alone is not enough<sup>3</sup> - the whole person is necessary for the religious life.<sup>4</sup> Anti-intellectualism is rejected because it despairs of reaching ultimate truth, which, "we believe, with Plato, is fully knowable though not fully known."<sup>5</sup> Anti-intellectualism wrecks both science and religion, rejecting the correspondence theory of truth, and is the progenitor of pragmatism "which disintegrates the whole structure of science and incidently

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2. Ibid. p. 325 f.

3. Cf. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 154: "I cannot accept any definition which identifies mysticism with excited or hysterical emotionalism, with sublimated eroticism, with visions and revelations, with supernatural (dualistically opposed to natural) activities, nor, on the philosophical side, with irrationalism."

4. Cf. Helm, Gloomy Dean, p. 59: "Mysticism is not a method of attaining information, but a total spiritual philosophy which, through combined activity of thought, will, and feeling, reveals the true nature of the universe."

5. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 9. Cf. p. 152. The Platonist hope is the foundation of all religious and intellectual quest. The content of mysticism "is essentially ontological, standing or falling by the Platonic act of faith that the completely real is completely knowable."

bids every superstition which seems to work to take heart of grace."<sup>6</sup>  
 Man's reason and will<sup>7</sup> - individual and collective - must be used to  
 their fullest extent in fathoming, expressing, and checking his experience  
 of the Divine.<sup>8</sup>

Inge is often categorized as anti-institutional,<sup>9</sup> and indeed he says  
 the Church's role in this process of checking, fathoming, and expressing  
 is a fairly insignificant one. He bitterly attacked the idea, as did  
 Tyrrell, that a man cannot be a Christian unless he is a Churchman.<sup>10</sup>  
 He frequently cited the corruptions, particularly the authoritarianism,  
 of the Church, and could even say "There is nothing in the political  
 history of Catholicism which suggests in the slightest degree that the  
 Spirit of Christ has been the guiding principle in its councils. Its  
 methods have, on the contrary, been more cruel, more fraudulent, more  
 unscrupulous than those of most secular powers."<sup>1</sup> It is only by its

6. Inge, Science, Religion, and Reality, p. 361.

7. Cf. Mysticism in Religion, pp. 157-63. Spiritual and ethical progress  
 must go hand in hand with knowledge of reality. The pure in heart shall  
 see God. "Each man's self is determined by his prevailing interests.  
 Where our treasure is, there will our heart, ourself, be also. What  
 we love, that we are."

8. e. g. Faith and Knowledge, p. 175 f.

9. e. g. by Michael Ramsey, Gore to Temple, pp. 66 f.

10. Cf. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 236.

1. Ibid., p. 237.



inherent indestructibility that the real religion of Christ has survived the Church. "The logical choice must ultimately be between the great international Catholic Church and. . .the religion of the spirit. The religion of Protestants. . .belongs to the latter type, . . .for with them institutions are never much more than associations for mutual help and edification."<sup>2</sup> Any rebirth that will come about in Christianity will come from outside the Church and will be fought by ecclesiastics.<sup>3</sup>

Though Inge could go into excesses of individualism,<sup>4</sup> it was rarely a selfish, self-centered, or utilitarian individualism. He constantly recognized the fact that mutual help was a necessity in the growth in Christian life. In calmer moments he could say "Every religion must have an institutional as well as a mystical element,"<sup>5</sup> and agree with Windelband that "while proceeding from the individual, mysticism regards individualism as a sin."<sup>6</sup> A pathological fear of the institutional Church which he could never overcome accounts for his inability to accept fully von Hugel's rich doctrine of the institutional element in religion, as he accepted the other two elements discerned by that greater thinker. But bombast aside,

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2. Outspoken Essays, I, p. 239.

3. Cf. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 143.

4. e. g. Inge, Outspoken Essays, I, p. 236: "I mean to know God and my own soul; these two and no third whatever. . . ."

5. Inge, Christian Mysticism, pp. 329-30.

6. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 142.



his idea of the experience of the transcendent God by the individual, expressed and fathomed by the whole personality, and with the help of others, was close indeed to the Roman Modernists.

#### 4. J. M. THOMPSON

Of those associated with the views of the Modern Churchmen, the theologian whose career most nearly paralleled that of Loisy and Tyrrell was J. M. Thompson, an Anglo-Catholic by background, who has been called "the martyr of English Modernism." As fellow and dean of divinity at Magdalen College, he wrote in 1911 Miracles in the New Testament, for which the same year Bishop Talbot of Winchester withdrew his license, and for which, the following year, Bishop Gore deprived him of the right to officiate in the Diocese of Oxford. The controversy surrounding his book was a primary impetus to the appointment of the Commission on Doctrine in the Church of England (1922). Thompson was forced to resign as dean of divinity and after one more theological work (Through Facts to Faith, 1912), he quitted theological study altogether<sup>7</sup> to devote himself to French history. Of all the figures in modern English theology, Thompson is perhaps the most under-estimated.

Accepting seriously the latest methods of critical inquiry, Thompson attempts to approach the study of the Christian religion, and its origins in particular, with as great an impartiality as possible. There is no

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7. His last theological effort was "Christian Faith," in Hibbert Journal, no. 66, vol. 17, (January, 1918), p. 236.

talk of the "fulness of time" (of which Jesus and his contemporaries were ignorant), and the conclusions of the study are by no means limited to those of the Catholic creeds. Nor are philosophical arguments, such as what the Incarnation must have involved, taken into account.<sup>8</sup> He even rejects the a posteriori approach: that the existence of Christianity today implies something about the facts of its origin.<sup>9</sup> He thus repudiated the contemporary tendency to shift the burden of proof from an a priori to an a posteriori argument. "On the contrary, we must insist upon a close study of the evidence and hope by that to arrive at conclusions about the historical figure of Jesus which will force us to say that he was God."<sup>10</sup>

So Thompson approaches, for example, the alleged miracles<sup>1</sup> of Jesus recorded in the New Testament. Neither argument as to the probability of miracles, nor the general presupposition of many that miracles are a corollary of the Incarnation, are allowed to affect the study of a specific miracle. Thompson approached the problem not from the philosophic

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8. Cf. esp. Thompson, Jesus According to St. Mark. (London, 1909), pp. 16-17.

9. Cf. Thompson in Modern Churchman, vol. 3, no. 9, (December, 1913), p. 484.

10. Idem.

1. Thompson, Miracles, accepts the definition of miracle in Murray's English Dictionary, vol. 6, p. 486: "It is a marvelous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power, or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity, or of some supernatural being; chiefly, an act, e. g. of healing, exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either Divine or specially favoured by God."

or scientific side, but, unusually, from literary criticism of the New Testament,<sup>2</sup> and his critical examination of the stories led to the conclusion that the original events behind the alleged miracles need not be regarded as miraculous. He does not prejudice the study philosophically by saying that miracles are not possible, "but since, ex hypothesi, they are exceptions to the ordinary non-miraculous sequence of things, considerably more evidence will be required for miracles than for other events."<sup>3</sup> Thompson believes there is sufficient evidence, from medical and psychological experience, in studying the stories themselves to say that the original events were not miraculous. The healings of Christ,<sup>4</sup> due to an absence of diagnostic skill and the attributing of disease to evil powers, as well as a tendency to exaggerate the successes of the great healer, took on miraculous attributes. The non-healing wonders recorded (such as the water into wine, or the walking on water) are probably symbolic, and not literal, and Mark's collection of wonders does not rest on his own experience (as do the passion accounts, probably). Luke and Matthew, in turn, add no authentic

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2. The Warden of Keble comments on Thompson's Miracles in the New Testament in The Guardian. (July 21, 1911), p. 972: "The acceptance of the miraculous will never be decided in the last resort by literary considerations."
  3. Thompson, Miracles. p. vi.
  4. In Jesus According to St. Mark, Thompson deals with why Jesus healed: it was not to gain publicity (he usually enjoins silence) or to back up his claims (except in the case of the Capernian paralytic). He healed spontaneously in love, with no ulterior motive.

detail to Mark, but rather heighten the wonder, and John selects a few miracles as deliberate explication of Christ's divinity.<sup>5</sup>

The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are a separate category of miracle in that they are worked upon Jesus, rather than through him. Evidence for the Virgin Birth is weak: St. Paul says nothing of it, seems to believe in Jesus' human parentage, and sees Jesus' divinity as declared in the Resurrection. Mark knows nothing of it and sees Jesus as assured of divine Sonship at Baptism. Acts merely repeats Mark and Paul. John ignores the Virgin Birth altogether. Luke 1 and 2 provide support for a Virgin Birth only on the strength of one verse, and "either by the transposition of 1:27, which is a doublet of 2:5, or by the removal of 1:34, which is out of harmony with the context, the whole idea of a miraculous birth would vanish from the Gospel."<sup>6</sup> Matthew 1 and 2 alone narrate certainly the Virgin Birth and yet are inconsistent with Luke 1 and 2, make use of prophecy, and are artificial in tone. The silence of Jesus, the apparent lack of interest by the crowds and disciples in his birth, also witness against the Virgin Birth. It is likely, therefore, that God's love worked for our salvation through a man born naturally, and anyway, the fact that Jesus was born miraculously adds nothing necessarily to the value of his life.

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5. Thompson, Miracles, pp. 7 ff.

6. Ibid. p. 159.



Thompson divides the evidence for the Resurrection into two categories: the empty tomb and the appearances. On the empty tomb Mark's tradition is superior. Nothing said about Joseph of Arimathaea in Matthew, Luke, and John is more than unoriginal expansion of Mark. The details of the visit to Pilate are obscured. Matthew confuses the situation by adding the stories of the guard and the descent of an angel. Luke tries to strengthen the evidence by giving the women time to examine the tomb before the two men appear, and John tries also by bringing two apostles to the scene. Luke's account is just a development from Mark; John is largely at variance with Mark. Matthew's attempt to explain the nature of the Resurrection (the removal of the stone, i. e. making <sup>the</sup> Resurrection body physical) is entirely opposite John's (where the clothes are discovered in the grave, though the stone is also removed!). Only later, when the apostles are met together, do the women say they found a man who spoke to them of the Resurrection, and by then it is unverifiable. But soon the young man becomes an angel and the empty tomb primary evidence. But

evidence (however early) which was originally inconclusive, and which has been so overlaid by later developments, cannot carry much weight. A possible reconstruction of the facts, indeed, throws the ultimate responsibility for the story of the Empty Tomb upon St. Mark himself. But, in any case, the women's story was an appendix to the belief in the Resurrection, and not the ground of it.

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7. Ibid., p. 192.



And Luke 22:24 ff. clearly shows that some of Jesus' followers had heard the tale of the empty tomb, but believed in no Resurrection.

The real evidence for the Resurrection is the appearances, which are testified to throughout the whole New Testament. "The fact of certain appearances, however, is one thing; the exact nature of them is another. And on this point the evidence is by no means clear."<sup>8</sup> By the same process as other miracles grew up, so belief in the physical Resurrection of the human body of Jesus flourished. Thompson believed, however, that "as we may believe with St. Mark that Jesus was born of human parents, and yet call him divine; so we may believe with St. Paul that his human body remained in the grave and yet worship him as risen and alive."<sup>9</sup> To Paul, Jesus' life in the flesh was prologue and not the play. The divinity of Christ was a fact of the present, not the past - something felt presently in experience now, not discovered in historical research.<sup>10</sup>

Thompson is only carrying Lux Mundi to its logical conclusion when he says "The believer in miracles makes the double mistake of looking for God, not in the normal event, but in the abnormal, and not in the agency but in the act,"<sup>1</sup> whereas natural laws are God's way of working. So to

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8. Ibid., p. 205. St. Paul views the Resurrection body as something entirely new. Matthew views it as material. Luke has the confusing idea that the body appeared and disappeared, but was fully tangible.

9. Ibid., p. 211.

10. Ibid., p. 212.

1. Ibid., p. 211.

reject the miraculous is not to reject the supernatural. To discover that the historical Jesus is non-miraculous is nothing more than to acknowledge, with orthodoxy, his complete humanity. And it is difficult indeed to see how a person miraculously born can be truly called "perfect man," or how a body not subject to natural law can be called a human body.<sup>2</sup> Christians have been slow to acknowledge the limitations, other than physical, which a real Incarnation imposes.<sup>3</sup> It is wrong to seek the divinity of Christ elsewhere than in his perfect humanity, which in itself completely mediates the Divine of which it is the image.<sup>4</sup>

"Though no miracles accompanied his entry into life, or presence in, or departure from the world; though He did not think or speak otherwise than as a man; though he yields nothing to historical analysis but human elements; yet in Jesus Christ God is incarnate - discovered and worshipped, as God alone can be, by the insight of faith."<sup>5</sup> Divinity is not an historical

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2. Thompson comments in Modern Churchman, vol. 1, no. 5, (August, 1911), p. 245: "This, if we mistake not, is Dr. Gore's doctrine of kenosis developed to its logical conclusion." Though Thompson rejected kenosis because of the dual consciousness which he feels it implies. (cf. Through Facts to Faith, p. 105 f.)
  3. Cf. Thompson, Jesus According to St. Mark, pp. 39, 73, 108, 163: including ignorance, growth, ability to be tempted.
  4. He rejected any dualistic theory of two incompatible essences, God and man. (cf. Miracles, p. 213 f.) H. E. W. Turner, Jesus Lord and Master, 4th impression, (London, 1960), calls this Monism p. 157: "Nature and supernature are the same orders of being, obey the same laws, but while nature is Reality scientifically treated, supernature is the same reality religiously regarded."
  5. Thompson, Miracles, p. 217.

fact which can be proved by historical evidence.<sup>6</sup> It was by their experience of this single human being that the disciples came to worship him as Divine. It is in the humanity of Jesus that the faith arising from present experience finds Christ's true divinity.<sup>7</sup> We are led by a true appreciation of the human historical facts about the man Jesus to call him divine. And this hypothesis is verified by the insight of religious experience.

But while he suggests, against John, that the divine nature never expressed itself other than through human thoughts, words, and actions,<sup>8</sup> Thompson was not indifferent to the earthly life of Jesus, as against St. Paul. "The mystical knowledge of the risen Saviour must normally be mediated by the historical knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>9</sup> No fact of history per se is significant, unless it is regarded as significant by someone who, on the basis of some criterion, decides it is significant. There can never be such a thing as a return to mere historic fact, as the

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6. Cf. Thompson, Through Facts, p. 84; also, p. 104: "With personalities not strictly human, history can have nothing to do. That is to say, if their actions might include moral miracles, parallel to physical miracles which experience has already rejected, history could not deal with them."

7. Thompson, Jesus According to St. Mark, pp. 276-8.

8. Ibid., p. 216.

9. Idem. Cf. also R. G. Parsons, "Jesus: Human and Divine," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), for a similar position.

Liberal Protestants desired. All dealing with history is done on the basis of presuppositions as to what will be found significant. The divinity of Christ is proclaimed when religious experience appreciates historical fact, by the person moving "through facts to faith." "The basis of Christian apologetics needs to be sought less in historical science and more in religious experience."<sup>10</sup> The creeds to which we adhere express the appreciation of the historical fact of Christ in terms of the fourth and fifth centuries.

As a New Testament scholar, Thompson was particularly concerned with the adjudication of the significance of the historical Jesus by the New Testament writers. But religious experience is not merely of value in determining the significance of a dead person, whose example we are called upon to follow. In saying that "the historical judgment as to what Christ was is less central in Christianity than the mystical and experimental judgment as to what he is,"<sup>11</sup> Thompson came very close indeed to the Catholic Modernists.<sup>2</sup> Not only do we move from facts of history to faith,<sup>3</sup> but the religious experience which enables that judgment also reveals to us the living Christ - and this experience is "the only ultimate proof of

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10. Thompson, Through Facts, p. 115.

1. Ibid., p. 145.

2. Cf. W. N. Pittenger on Thompson in Anglican Theological Review, vol. xxxix, no. 4, (October, 1957), p. 295.

3. i. e. through the perfection of Christ's humanity to judge him divine.



orthodox Christology."<sup>4</sup>

There is no such thing as a simple return to a supposedly historical figure; all study of facts is forced of necessity to pronounce upon the significance of those facts. The early Christians found in their experience that the historical figure was of great significance and judged him divine. Christians today feel that the figure is alive and still significant, and concur in the adjudication of the early Christians who found in the historical Jesus the fullest revelation of God in human terms. Christians of all ages are at one, then, in proclaiming that the historical Jesus is indeed God incarnate.

Why then, with such simple beginnings in Galilee, is the present organization of Christianity so complex? Thompson closely follows the Catholic Modernists in holding that the beginning includes the end as the seed includes the flower.<sup>5</sup> Nor does it matter if Christ explicitly founded the Church or not, if the Church was the outgrowth of his life

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4. Thompson, Through Facts, p. 152.

5. Thompson, Jesus According to St. Mark, p. 3. Though the persistence of the Church was no evidence of truth: ". . . It is contended. . . that the wonderful progress and persistence of the Christian Church proves what it believed was true. But one of the things which is most obvious to a student of religions is the persistence of religious sects which, if they were not based on an illusion, seem to have lost both the *raison d'etre* and the enthusiasm which they formerly possessed. Persistence (and even a kind of progress) is no sure evidence of truth." (Through Facts, p. 88).



on earth.<sup>6</sup> In the experience of this community, especially in its eucharistic worship,<sup>7</sup> the faith of the individual was developed and the significance of Jesus yesterday and today was felt.

##### 5. JAMES FRANKLIN BETHUNE-BAKER

J. F. Bethune-Baker (1861-1951) remained a scholar for his entire life, and as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge wrote what for fifty years was the definitive general study of Christian doctrine to 451 A. D.<sup>1</sup> Though he was not a member of the Modern Churchman's Union, he expressed close sympathy with it,<sup>2</sup> and delivered perhaps the most significant paper at the Girton Conference of 1921.

Bethune-Baker felt that any attempt to base our explanation of Christ solely on the basis of his human life was bound to fail.<sup>3</sup> We do not know whether St. Paul knew Jesus "after the flesh" or not, but we do know that he refused to know him so any longer after he experienced the living resurrected Christ. "Though he had lived on earth it was what he had become,

6. Thompson, reviewing Ronald Knox's Some Loose Stones, Modern Churchman. vol. 3, no. 9, (December, 1913), p. 485.

7. Thompson, Through Facts, pp. 194-196.

1. An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine. 8th Ed. (London, 1949).

2. Bethune-Baker, The Way of Modernism. (Cambridge, 1927), p. 127.

3. Bethune-Baker, The Faith of the Apostles' Creed. (London, 1918), p. 18.

what they felt he was to them in their lives day by day, and what he was to shew himself in the future that interested them most."<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament reveals early Christians, experiencing the risen Christ, interpreting the facts of the historical Jesus as the facts were then known. These early writers, viewing such events, for example, as the healings, felt, in the light of the terrific impression Jesus made in his life time and now in their experience, that this formerly human figure reigned as God now, and so came to regard these healings as "miracles."<sup>5</sup> The Gospels, in Bethune-Baker's view, were less valuable as recording historical facts than as reporting the impression of Jesus. All significance which attached to the human life of Jesus became transformed in the light of experience, just as we should see the life of a friend in a new light if we suddenly discovered that he was not dead but had been raised from the dead. The "facts" recorded by the New Testament writers are therefore not scientific history (as if there were any such thing) but are facts already interpreted. The only sure fact is a general one: the terrific impression Jesus made. "The Christian religion may be true or false; but its truth or falsity does not depend on the accuracy of any one narrative in the Gospels, and therefore not on all of the taken together, but on the truth or untruth of the total experience of Christians."<sup>6</sup>

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4. Bethune-Baker, Early Traditions about Jesus. (New York, 1930), p. 9.

5. Bethune-Baker, Faith of the Apostles' Creed, p. 20.

6. Bethune-Baker, Way of Modernism, p. 48; cf. also Faith of Apostles' Creed, p. 209.

Theology is an attempt to rationalize this religious experience, to express concretely the interpretation it makes of facts. And, in describing, words and expressions are never adequate, and the analogies, explanations, and categories of thought of one age are even less adequate in a future age. "All. . .theologies are as truly pictures as were the myths of the first theologians."<sup>7</sup> The Catholic Modernist distinction between the experience and the expression of the experience must ever be borne in mind. The conviction which is expressed theologically by the credal doctrine of the Incarnation must ever remain essential to Christianity, though that particular expression and explanation of the conviction may become irrelevant and inadequate.<sup>8</sup> The articles of the Creed are therefore symbolic; they express a judgment or appreciation of facts. As a symbol, they are not the thing symbolized. Bethune-Baker seeks to find the religious conviction behind or the religious value of each clause of the Creed,<sup>9</sup> saying that some of the clauses cannot be regarded as literally meaningful

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7. Ibid. p. 25.

8. Bethune-Baker, Faith of the Apostles' Creed, pp. ix-x.

9. Ibid., p. xvii, p. xxiv. As such, any theological doctrine must be meaningful to be relevant to modern man. And he accepted Tyrrell's pragmatic test. Cf. Way of Modernism, p. 8 ff.: "Religion is not theology, but. . .theology grows out of religion. . . .All theological formulas must be tested by their correspondence with religious experience, . . .that their values are not speculative but practical." And Way of Modernism, p. 47: "Only life can furnish verification of a theory of life." Cf. also J. S. Bezzant reviewing Way of Modernism, Modern Churchman, vol. xvii, nos. 9 and 10, (December, 1927 - January, 1928), pp. 595 ff.

today (e. g. ascent and descent, sitting at the right hand, Virgin Birth).

Bethune-Baker foresaw much of later form-critical study.<sup>10</sup> Both the New Testament and the Creeds were an interpretation of the "facts" of Jesus' life in the light of present experience. Neither presented the facts per se. As to the facts, the Church has never been in a position to revise the version of the facts made in the second century by the New Testament writers. Dealing with the question of the Virgin Birth (which is probably recorded in two of the Gospels, though found no where else in the New Testament), Bethune-Baker remarks "As students of past modes of thought we cannot ignore the high probability that men of the first and second centuries who had found in Jesus the revelation of God, for whom in their religious experience he had the value of God, would be predisposed to assume that he entered on human life in a manner other than normal. . . ."<sup>1</sup> There is little need to investigate Bethune-Baker's study of the literary evidence. Like Lux Mundi, Bethune-Baker's main concern was to show that the Virgin Birth was an expression of the Incarnation, not the Incarnation itself. And clearly, from the earliest times, there were many who held the doctrine of the Incarnation but took no apparent interest in the Virgin Birth. Bethune-Baker also felt that the doctrine compromised the full humanity of Jesus. And clearly belief in Christ's divinity did not

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10. W. N. Pittenger on Bethune-Baker in his edition of Early Traditions About Jesus, (Greenwich, 1956), p. vi.

1. Bethune-Baker, The Miracle of Christianity (Letter to Gore), (London, 1914), p. 8. Cf. also The New View of Christianity, p. 273.



originally spring from knowledge of an alleged Virgin Birth, but rather from his Resurrection appearances and the experience of him as still alive.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, we do not believe in the Incarnation because of the alleged miracles which attended it. Lux Mundi had viewed the miracles as credible because of belief in the Incarnation. Bethune-Baker went beyond this in finding miracles a natural interpretation by first and second century writers of historical events in the light of their own experience.<sup>3</sup> They were expressing, in a world without our knowledge of the "laws of nature," the impression, for example, of a great healer, and a great healer, besides, whom they now experienced as alive. Naturally the events surrounding his life became miraculous.<sup>4</sup> The astonishing thing is that the New Testament is not filled with much more wonder-working than it now contains.

Likewise, the idea of a physical resurrection of the body of Jesus is most likely an intellectual inference made by some (but obviously not all) of the early disciples who felt him in spirit and perhaps saw him in vision alive.<sup>5</sup> That the disciples felt vividly his presence is indisputable;

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2. Bethune-Baker, Faith of Apostles' Creed. p. 95.

3. Ibid., pp. 182-83.

4. Cf. Bethune-Baker, Early Traditions About Jesus. p. 134.

5. Cf. esp. Ibid., p. 163 f.



that Jesus was actually physically raised from the tomb and appeared in a physical body to the disciples is again in line with the "common experience that stories of wonder do not lose in the telling. . . ." <sup>6</sup>

Bethune-Baker thinks it far more likely that the Resurrection of Jesus was the manifestation of Jesus in the Spirit, and that "the first manifestations were of the same spiritual order as the later ones, and, in any case, not of a physical, visible, and audible kind." <sup>7</sup>

Two doctrines are essential to Christianity in Bethune-Baker's eyes. <sup>8</sup> The Resurrection asserts that the Jesus of history has been raised from the dead and is reigning as God - this experience has been the treasure of Christians in every age from the time the disciples felt him to be alive among them in Galilee after the Crucifixion to the present experience of the living Christ by Christians today. The other essential doctrine of Christianity is the Incarnation - that this being whom we experience actually lived and died a human life upon earth, that he was completely and utterly human, like us in every respect, changeable, limited in knowledge, <sup>9</sup> tempted to sin (though never sinful).

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6. Ibid., p. 166.

7. Ibid., p. 167; Cf. Faith of Apostles' Creed, p. xxix f. for a similar view of the Ascension.

8. Cf. The Miracle of Christianity.

9. For his view of kenosis, cf. Faith of Apostles' Creed, p. 12.

Though he began with the experience of the risen Christ, like the Catholic Modernists, it was the latter doctrine of the Incarnation which was basic to his unusual and very valuable Christology. The theory of evolution he understood in a way somewhat similar to Lux Mundi: in the process of evolution the divine purpose is expressing and realizing itself through natural means.<sup>10</sup> The world is God's creation and is therefore part of the divine purpose. A fundamental antithesis between the supernatural and the natural is therefore rejected.<sup>1</sup> This is not pantheism, because it sees God in and through nature, not God as nature. He transcends the process in which he is nonetheless inherent.

In this natural process, the Incarnation is the climax, or inaugurates the climax, and is the supreme manifestation in human natural terms of the God who though transcendent has been revealing himself in the process. "Jesus is ἀνθρώπος τέλειος, the actualized ideal of man, man at the end of his evolution, complete; not that the manhood has been deified, nor yet again de-humanized (thoughts so abhorrent to Nestorius) but in virtue of its constitution *capax Dei*."<sup>2</sup> And just as God transforms the process in

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10. He disliked the idea of disrupting intrusions in the natural world of so-called contra- or super-natural forces, such as miracles imply. Cf. Bethune-Baker, "What Do We Mean by Incarnation," Modern Churchman, vol. 23, no. 1, (April, 1933), p. 37-38.

1. Bethune-Baker, Way of Modernism, p. 85; Cf. Bethune-Baker, "Jesus as both Human and Divine," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 293.

2. Bethune-Baker, Modern Churchman, Ibid., p. 296.

which he is inherent, his revelation through a human life in history does not, of course, mean that "God" equals "perfect man." It is, rather, the case that in the perfect man Jesus we see revealed what God has in mind for his creatures and we find illustrated that relationship which he intended for his creatures to have with him (their Creator).<sup>3</sup>

In explaining the Person of Christ, therefore, Bethune-Baker abandoned St. Paul's concept of the pre-existence of a Messiah, stored away, waiting to come to earth as a limited man and then return again. "The idea of the pre-existence of Jesus was an almost inevitable inference from the belief in his Godhead - an inference from an inference."<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless it is a valuable expression of the conviction of a previous age<sup>5</sup> that Jesus was the crowning manifestation and revelation in this world, in a human being, of the love and power and purpose of God who had gradually been revealing himself in the natural process. "When I say that the man Jesus is 'God,' I mean he is for me the index of my conception of God."<sup>6</sup> And in getting to know Jesus I thereby come to know God. Therein lies his "divinity."

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3. For a careful discussion of this, as well as of some incautious statements made by Bethune-Baker which lend themselves to a "point to point identity" of God and man, and to a doctrine of evolutionary monism, cf. W. N. Pittenger, Word Incarnate, pp. 199-202.
  4. Bethune-Baker, "Jesus as Both Human and Divine," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 297.
  5. Likewise for the idea of "substance."
  6. Bethune-Baker, "Jesus as Both Human and Divine," Modern Churchman, vol. xi, nos. 5 and 6, (September, 1921), p. 300.

Part of the glory of the Incarnation is that the human Jesus, as the climax of the natural process in which God has been revealing himself, is not only "the scion of many forefathers," but as a complete man like us in every way in limitation and potential for temptation he is "the first-born of many brethren."<sup>7</sup> As perfect man he illustrates the consciousness of God that is possible for all men. "Our exploitation of the doctrine [of the Incarnation] in the past has been far too one-sided. We have not had the courage of our conviction that in this experience we have a true revelation of the relation existing not only between the man Jesus and God, but therefore from the beginning between all men and God."<sup>8</sup> Jesus enjoyed, in actual fact, a unique sonship, but "he claimed no monopoly of sonship: the aim of his life was to make men worthy to be what by the very law of their being they were meant to be. . . .We believe him to be, indeed, on earth in a human life the perfect image of a relationship in which man stands to God and God to man."<sup>9</sup> The Bible, if it is a picture of a strange human-divine personality, who, miraculously born, does things contrary to what we know of natural law, whose body is suddenly lifted up, is nothing like so significant for man as it is if it is "the great picture-book of man's religious experience and seeks through the medium of pictures to arouse or quicken or confirm the capacity in us all for

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7. Ibid... p..299.

8. Bethune-Baker, Faith of Apostles' Creed. p. 133; cf. p. 135.

9. Ibid... pp. 58-59.



entering into the same experience and relating it to our own personalities and lives."<sup>10</sup>

E. L. Mascall misunderstood Bethune-Baker when he implied that Bethune-Baker believed man was now capable on his own of realizing the potential which had been actualized in Christ in an exemplary way.<sup>1</sup> Bethune-Baker's view was, however, that we are saved by God's grace and are at best cooperating agents. He follows closely the Pauline view that Christ was exalted because of his humble obedience. Bethune-Baker had a high view of the Church and its role in man's quest to realize his potential.<sup>2</sup> Though Jesus organized no Church, he formed around him a nucleus who actively served him and were closest to him in his life time, and who afterwards were accorded authority and honor by the disciples.<sup>3</sup> In Bethune-Baker's view, the Christian theory of life was social: "it is membership of a divinely ordered society that our Lord's teaching had always in view as the goal for men to aim at; and the qualifications which he inculcated could only be realized in a Society."<sup>4</sup> The New Testament shows Baptism became natural and that it was common for the early Christians to

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10. Bethune-Baker, Way of Modernism, pp. 76-77.

1. Cf. E. L. Mascall, Christian Theology and Natural Science, 2nd impression, (London, 1957), p. 306.

2. This, of course, is not to reckon the Church's role as primarily utilitarian. Its role is to worship the God whom it seeks to experience.

3. Bethune-Baker, Early Traditions About Jesus, p. 201.

4. Bethune-Baker, Faith of the Apostles' Creed, p. 153.



break bread together and help one another. Bethune-Baker accepted Loisy's view that the present Church was a natural development from this original nucleus,<sup>5</sup> and from the practices of the early Christians who experienced the spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit working among them. And for men today, in Bethune-Baker's view, "it is through the Holy Spirit. . . , in active cooperation with the organized life, the worship and sacraments, of the Christian Society that individuals realize themselves. . . ." <sup>6</sup>

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5. Cf. Bethune-Baker, Way of Modernism, p. 11 f.

6. Bethune-Baker, Faith of Apostles' Creed, pp. 162-63. Though the Church is not, of course, infallible. It is not a divine society in the sense that it is perfect, but in the sense that the Holy Spirit works in and through it. Cf. Way of Modernism, pp. 15-16. Cf. Faith of Apostles' Creed on Church of England, p. xvi.

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